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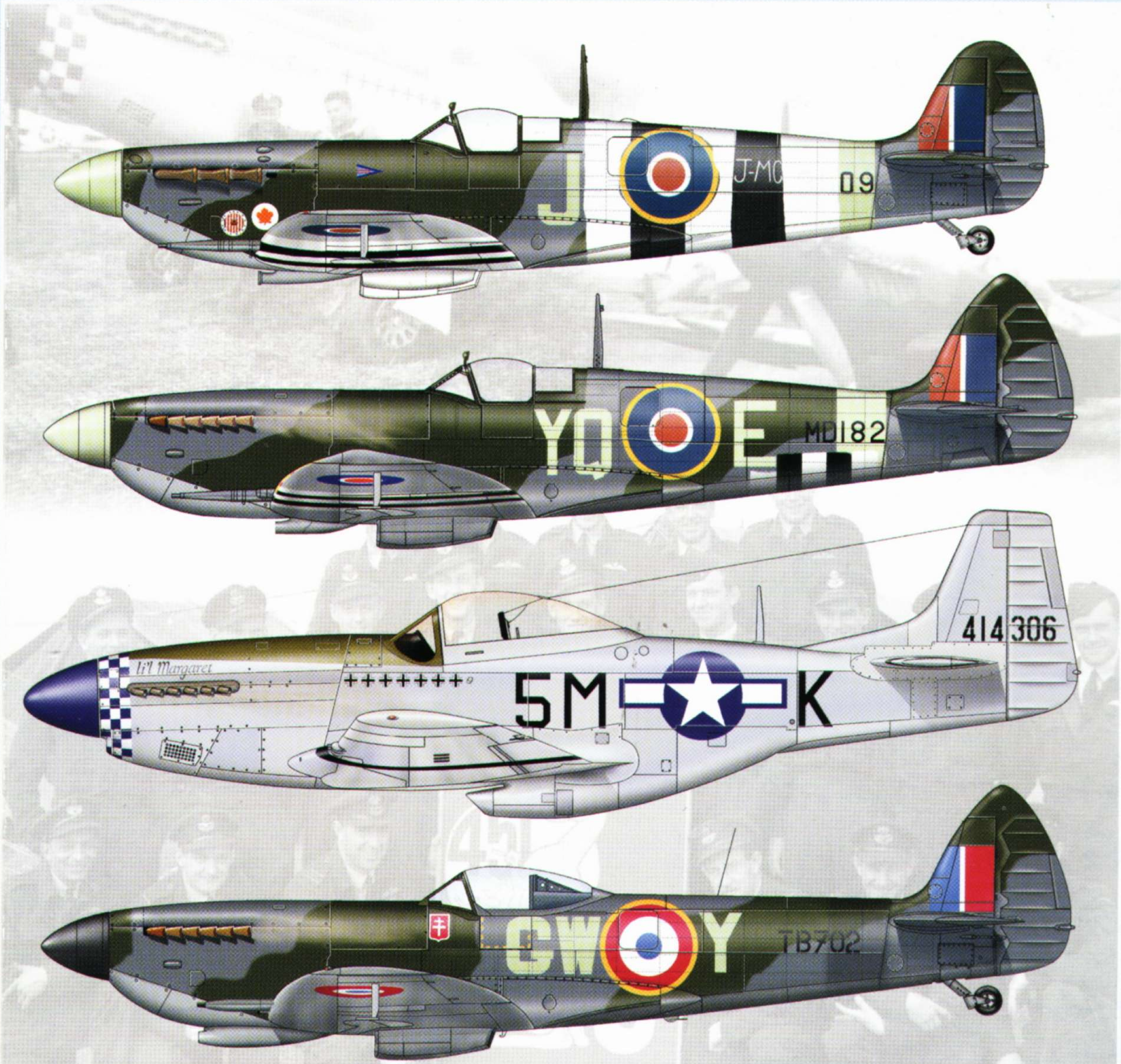
from D-DAY TO VICTORY!

FIGHTERS IN EUROPE 1944-45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- MALCOLM LAIRD -

Classic Warbird Series No 5

from D-DAY TO VICTORY!

FIGHTERS IN EUROPE 1944-45

- By Malcolm Laird -

An escort Mustang and its charge..

A 315 (Polish) Squadron Mustang III escorts a 489 (NZ) Squadron Beaufighter TFX, over the North Sea. See page 64. (E Edwards via RNZAF via B Davidson)

No. 5 in the Classic Warbirds series

'From D-Day to Victory - Fighters in Europe 1944-45' covers the period from Mid 1944 until the post war Occupation Force.

I am grateful to those ex-servicemen and their families who gave interviews and allowed me access to their personal papers and photo albums. Mrs Pamela Lang allowed me to copy and publish extracts from her late husband's diary and log book. I am grateful to the late Ray Danzey and noted aviation artist Ron Fulstow who helped with the chapter on 486 Squadron; to Warren Schrader who filled in gaps on RAF Meteor jet operations in the closing days of the war; to Maurice Mayston who was engaged in the first Allied aerial victories on D-Day and to Johnny Checketts.

The chapter on Mosquito nightfighters is based on Allott Gabites self-published book 'Monkeys Birthday'. Gabites had initially been posted as an Instructor but eventually obtained an operational posting. This desire to serve was shared by so many others, like Jack Cleland who was initially rejected for being 'too old', Warren Schrader who had to overcome health questions and Warren Blain who suffered polio as a child – he was lucky, the doctor who accepted him was a polio victim too.

The material on USAAF Tact/R and PR escort Mustangs was provided by aviation researcher and writer, Paul Ludwig of Seattle, Washington. The chapter on Jack Cleland is based on extracts from Tim Neilsen's book 'Jacks Adventures', which is advertised inside the back cover.

Special thanks to David Frowen for his editorial input
and proof reading and to Anthony Galbraith.

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FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATIONS..

- The Spitfire LF Mk Vc flown by Wing Commander John Milne Checketts, 142 Wing, June 1944.
- A Spitfire HF Mk VII of 616 Squadron RAF, September 1944.
- Captain Clyde East of the 15th TRS flew this Mustang F-6D, March 1945.
- Spitfire LF Mk 16 'GW-Y' of GC 4/2 "Ile de France", April 1945.
- Background collage: Top left is Captain Clyde East's F-6D, top right is the nose of a Spitfire Mk XIV, mid 1945 and lower are the pilots of 451 (RAAF) Squadron, with their unofficial Squadron badge, mid 1945.

INTRODUCTION

This fifth book in the Classic Warbirds Series covers some of the Allies day and night fighters over N.W. Europe, from mid 1944 until the immediate postwar Allied occupation of Germany. We have endeavoured to include as much new material as possible and avoid repeating 'potted histories' already well recorded.

For the fighter squadrons of the RAF's 2nd Tactical Air Force and the USAAF 8th and 9th Air Forces, this period was particularly intense. First, supporting the Normandy Invasion itself, then later encountering strong Luftwaffe opposition as the air war was fought increasingly over German soil. From this campaign comes the content of this book and a wealth of material for modellers and aviation enthusiasts alike.

Where possible each chapter is from the perspective of individuals who were there. Each story is illustrated with photographs, including coverage of other squadrons involved in the campaign. Most are published for the first time and are from private collections.

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D-DAY GUN SPOTTERS

Preparations for D-Day were the day to day work of both RAF, USAAF and Fleet Air Arm Squadrons as June 1944 arrived. 886 was one of the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) Seafire Squadrons placed under RAF command as part of the combined Allied Air Spotting Pool; along with 808, 801, 887 and 894 FAA Squadrons[1], several RAF Squadrons and the US Navy's VCS-7[2]. These Squadrons were temporarily formed into No. 34 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing and based at Naval Air Station Lee-on-Solent, near Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Lieutenant (A) Hugh Lang RNZNVR (Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve, "(A)" for Air) flew multiple daily sorties preparing for D-Day and kept a detailed diary of his wartime experiences. What follows are excerpts from that diary and his flying Log Book.

June 5th: Briefing at 5.15PM, it is the real thing tomorrow, D-DAY

June 6th: Invasion of Europe begins. Lee-on-Solent went into action with the first 886 Squadron aircraft taking off at 4.45AM in the dark, to spot for the bombardment warships. The weather was rather foul to start but improved later in the morning. I was off at 7AM (in Seafire L.III, NF541) with Alan Horstead for two prearranged targets. However my radio became U/S (unserviceable) and he carried out the shoot. On the next sortie at 9.30AM I took off alone and again the radio went U/S. The whole beach is aflame and flak flying around to no mean degree. One of our pilots, Paddy Wallace, was hacked down by flak but is returning [Wallace crash landed inside the beachhead]. Several others also force landed.

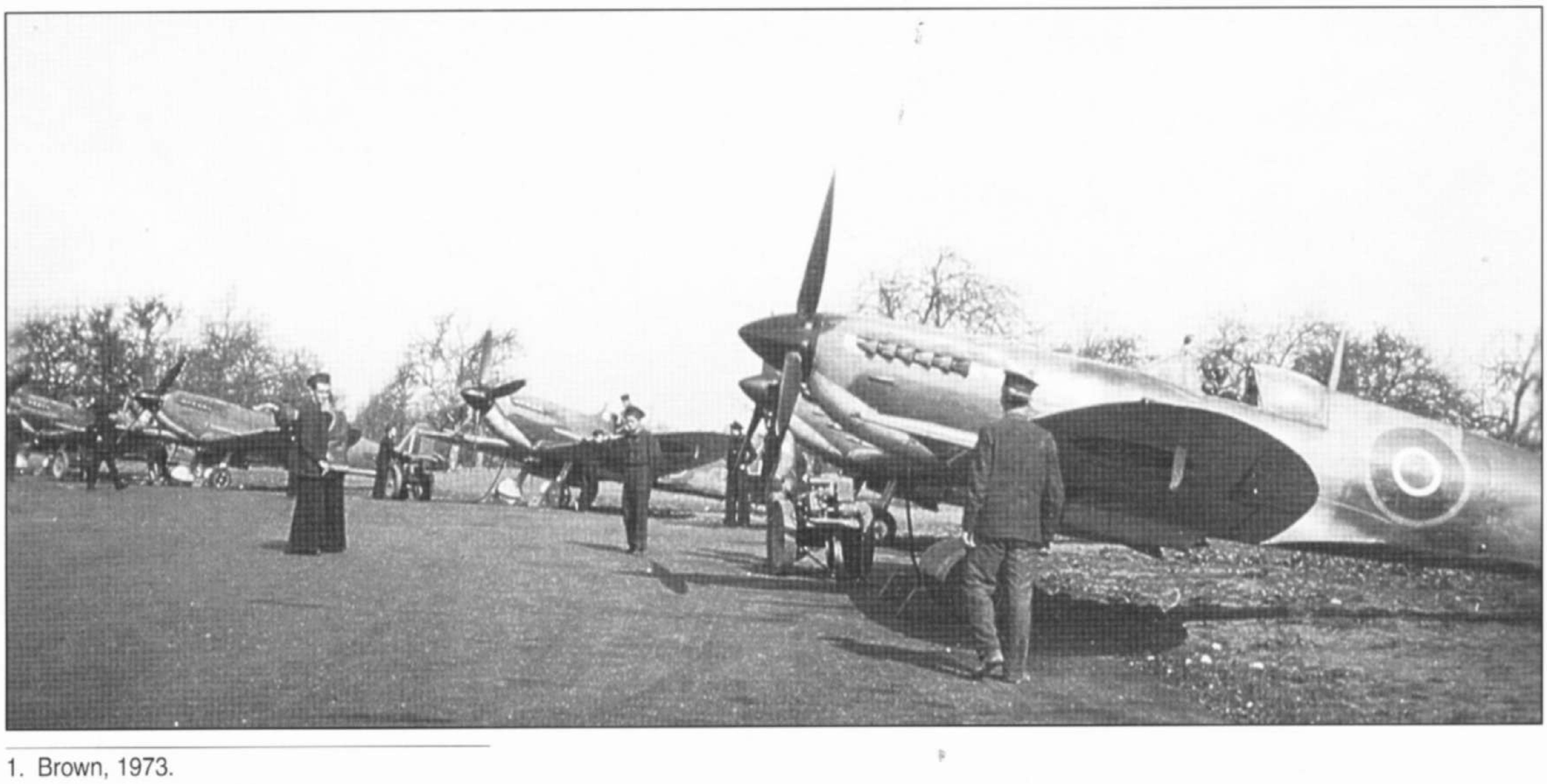
At 1425 (2.25PM) we took off again and had some real fun. We carried out an impromptu shoot, directing *HMS Warspite*. Some Jerry fired at me with light flak, so I turned *Warspite* onto him. The German position turned out to be a heavy ack-ack (anti-aircraft) battery. Three hits on guns, then I strafed them scoring two wizard bursts on two guns. Ammunition exploded and shoot entirely successful. Tomorrow I hope for better things. Long live 886.

June 7th: First sortie at 7.00AM. An impromptu shoot! Found a battle going on with our tanks advance apparently held up. Directed *Warspite* on to enemy armoured cars in the area and drove them from a village

Hugh (Sam) Lang with his personal 'Saint' emblem on the tail of a Seafire L.II, in 1943. He was born on 26 January 1917, in Mataura, New Zealand.

Lang initially joined the Air Force, but transferred to the FAA before aircrew training began. Post war he married Pamela M C Holland whom he met in England during the war. She had been a WREN aircraft checker with the Stores Division of NAS Lee-on-Solent. They married in England in 1945 and moved to New Zealand in May 1946. Hugh Lang retired as the Town Clerk for the City of Petone, New Zealand in 1978. Hugh Lang died in 1979 and is survived by his wife Pamela and their three sons, Richard, James and Alister. (P Lang)

New Seafire L.IIIs at RNAS Henstridge in March 1944. (P Lang)



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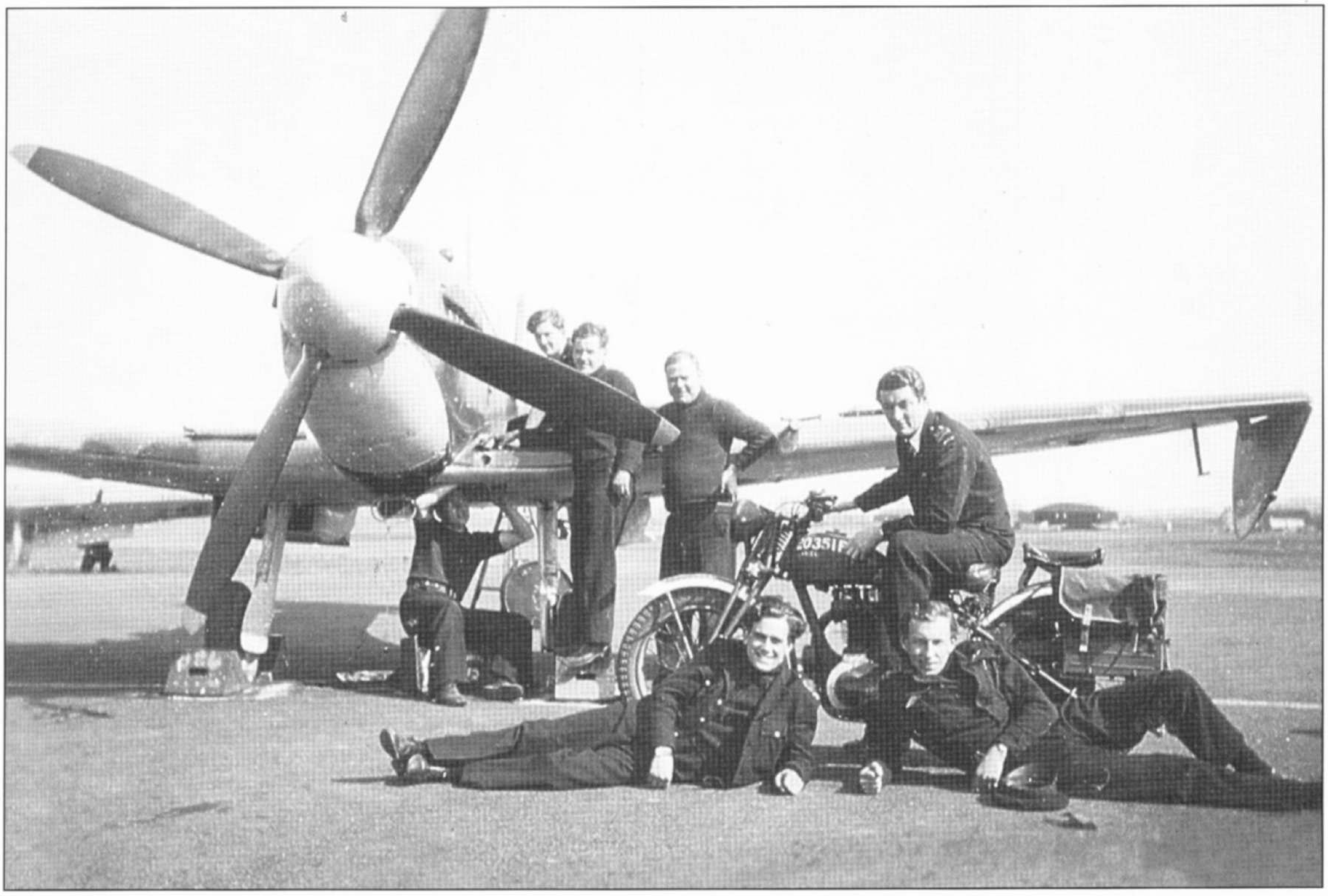
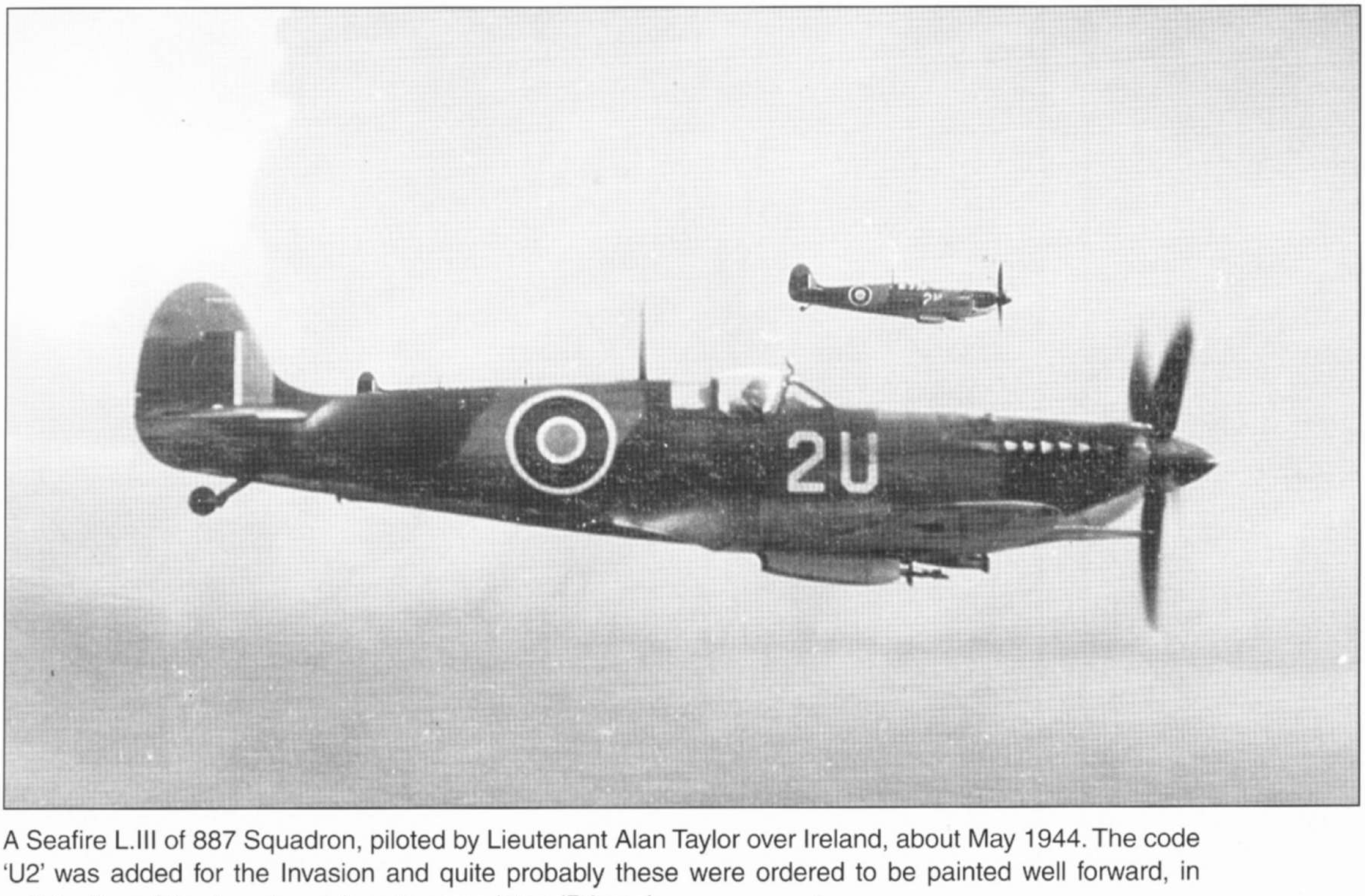
1. Brown, 1973.
2. Ludwig & Laird, 1998.



A Seafire L.III of No. 3 Naval Fighter Wing at RNAS Henstridge, where 886 Squadron trained prior to the Invasion of Normandy. Although the Wing was based at RNAS Lee-on-Solent, the Squadrons also flew from Henstridge, Somerset and RNAS St. Merryn, Cornwall. A group of pilots pose in front of the aircraft. Note the wingtip, which could be folded down for more convenient ground/deck handling. (P Lang)



A Seafire L.III of 887 Squadron, piloted by Lieutenant Alan Taylor over Ireland, about May 1944. The code 'U2' was added for the Invasion and quite probably these were ordered to be painted well forward, in anticipation of the Invasion stripes to come later. (P Lang) south to Authie which we again shelled. Came back with one bullet hole in my starboard wing. Val (Lieutenant Commander P E I Bailey) was shot down by our own ships gunfire but may be safe. I hope so! Dickie (Lieutenant D B Law) was brought down also, by some light flak in our own lines – safe. Later in the day flew a second sortie. Horstead conducted shoot, not much good! Drop tank failed and came home early. Mike Crosley claims a 109 – no film. Barraclough (Sub-Lieutenant D W Barraclough) of 897 also claimed one. Wallace arrived back tonight. C.O. hacked down by three 109's, I am now acting CO – only for a while I hope.

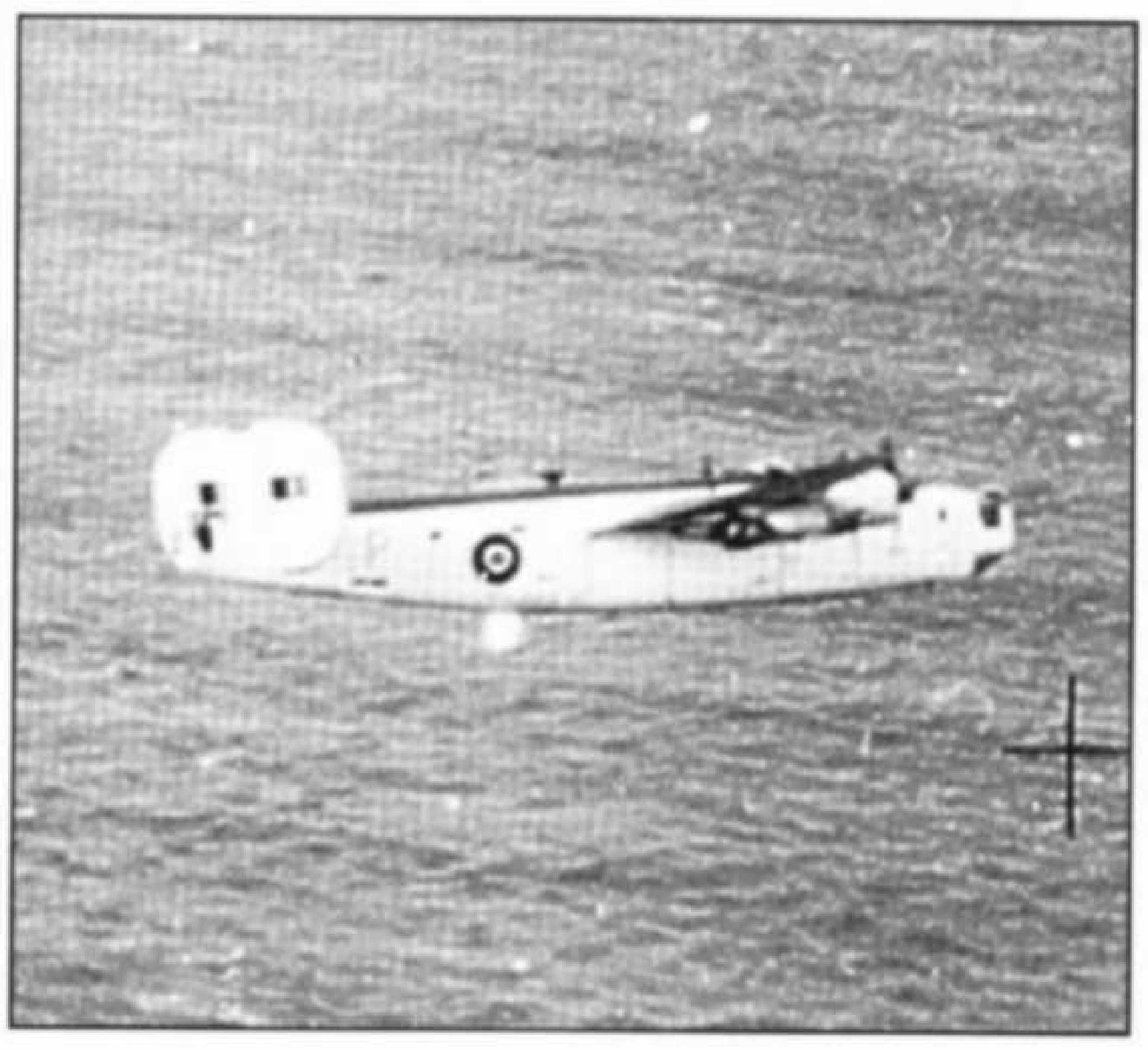
June 8th: Off at 0500 hours (in Seafire L.III NF525). Ran into intense flak over Le Havre and lost Alan Horstead. Orbited over [the battle area] and called him and *HMS Warspite*. Two Fw 190s made a pass at me but I evaded them and gave the second one a longish burst from 400-600 yards, seeing strikes on his wing root. He turned slowly to starboard and then I saw tracer flashing past underneath me, so I pulled violently to port and a cannon shell hit my [propeller's] constant speed unit. The fan [propeller] stopped and I tried to bale out but the canopy would not open, so I decided to crash-land with the aircraft partly under control. I had to land in a wood but got down somehow, crashing into trees and had my face and arms cut about slightly. Hopped out and, after collecting: maps, revolver, first aid and escape kits, scrambled northwest to find our troops. After a while discovered an enemy HQ and hid in a cellar whilst I thought out the situation. Contacted French civilians who brought a Commando to help me. Had some very fine brandy in their cave, also some food in a house. The Commandos destroyed my suit and sent two men off to blow up my Seafire's gun sight as the 'Huns' were still thrashing around that area. Collected some souvenirs from the Jerry's stores and with Sergeant Leach [also a downed airman] and three Commandos (who confirmed my Fw 190 having seen it crash), I was finally evacuated. This was in a jeep under shellfire, as we were put on LST430 [a large tank landing craft] returning from the Invasion beach back to England.

June 9th: Had my wounds stitched and spent most of the day in the Mess 'having noggins' (drinks) whilst LST430 lay in the Solent. Finally disembarked at 12 midnight at Stokes Bay Pier and ended up in Cobham Hospital.

June 10th: Tim Metcalfe in the bed opposite me. Val, Buster and Maxy Newman came to see me and also the Intelligence Officer who took my report and said he would get my Fw 190 confirmed. Wrote to Pam (now Mrs Pamela Lang).

886 Squadron returns to the Navy

And so ended Hugh Lang's brief but hectic part in the Liberation of France. The Squadrons of the FAA, which had been the Royal Navy's contribution to the Air Spotting Pool, were handed back to Naval control on 15 July 1944. Hugh Lang's 886 Squadron was amalgamated with 808 Squadron and 886 disbanded. Like most of the pilots he was transferred to 885 Squadron and continued to train for tasks ahead. This included air gunnery, practice dive bombing and familiarising Coastal Command Liberator crews with the sight of Seafires. Lieutenant Hugh Lang commanded 885 Squadron in September – October 1944, but handed over to a new permanent Commanding Officer, Lt. Cdr. (A) J Rautley, in November 1944. The Squadron eventually re-equipped with Grumman F6F-5 Hellcats and served in the Pacific Theatre.



A North American Liberator, Anti-Submarine Patrol Bomber of Coastal Command, as mentioned in the text. (P Lang)

Lieutenant (A) Hugh Lang with a Grumman Hellcat. (P Lang)

Seafires of 885 Squadron training over Ireland, post D-Day. (P Lang)

MOBILE SPITFIRE SQUADRON

In the months prior to D-Day a vast armada of Allied fighter Squadrons moved to airfields in southern England to support the Invasion. Some were to follow and support the ground troops in Europe as early as mid June. This chapter is based on the first hand experiences of Flight Lieutenant Maurice Mayston of 485 (NZ) Squadron, and also includes photographs and information about some of the other RAF Spitfire Squadrons who fought from D-Day until the end of the war in Europe.

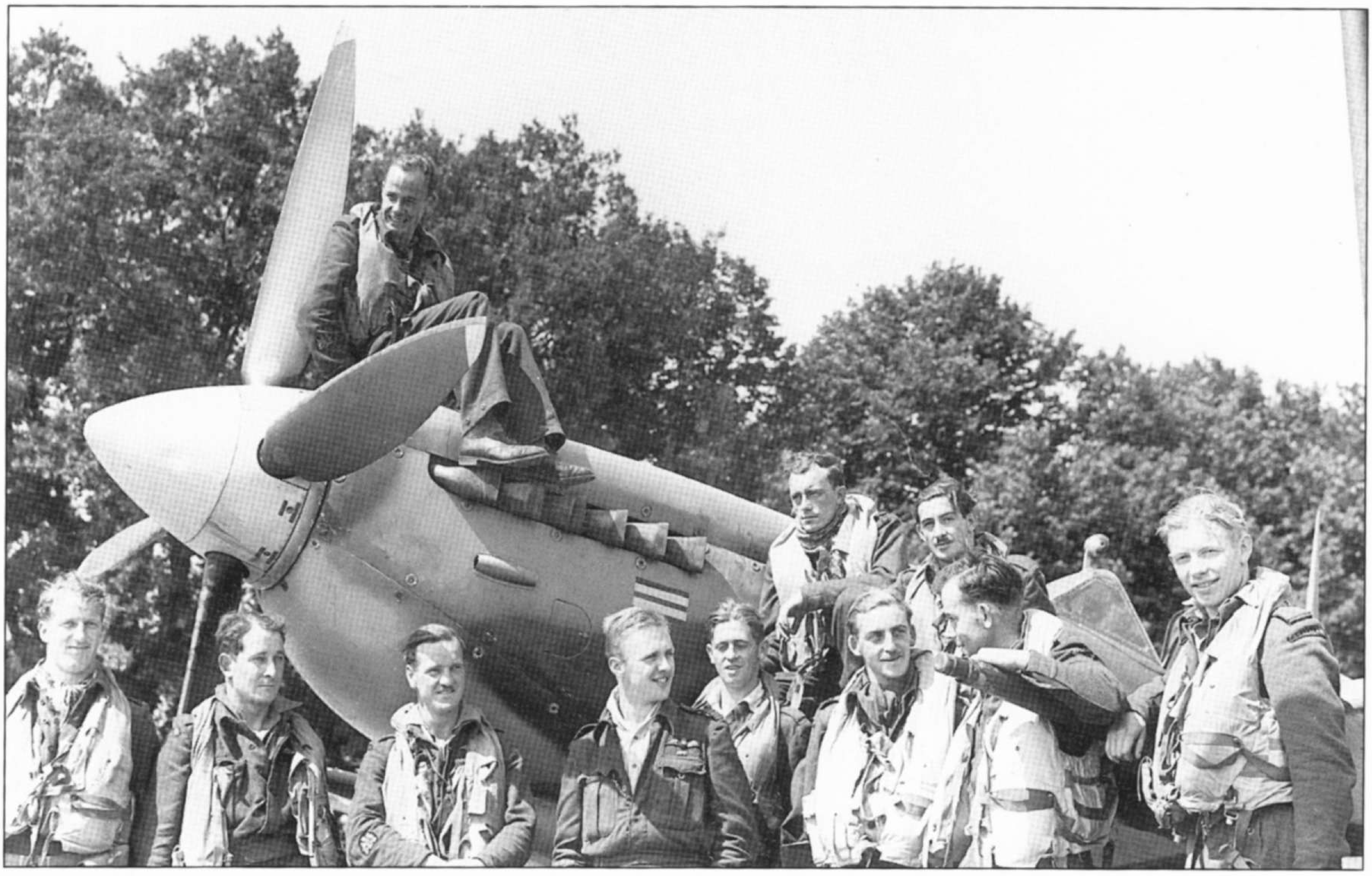
"No. 485 Squadron moved forward to a temporary landing strip near Selsey Bill, West Sussex, where we camped in tents and got used to the style of living we would have in France after the Invasion.

One of our jobs at the time was attacking V1 launching sites along the coast of France. As yet no V1s had been launched and the Air Force did its best to keep it that way. We carried a 500lb bomb under the fuselage and a 250lb under each wing, for a total of 1000lb per Spitfire Mk IX. We also had our guns with rounds loaded in a series of: one armour piercing, one incendiary and one high explosive. We didn't use much tracer. It's thanks to the Germans using so much tracer that I am alive today. Often the tracer was your only warning that you were being shot at!"

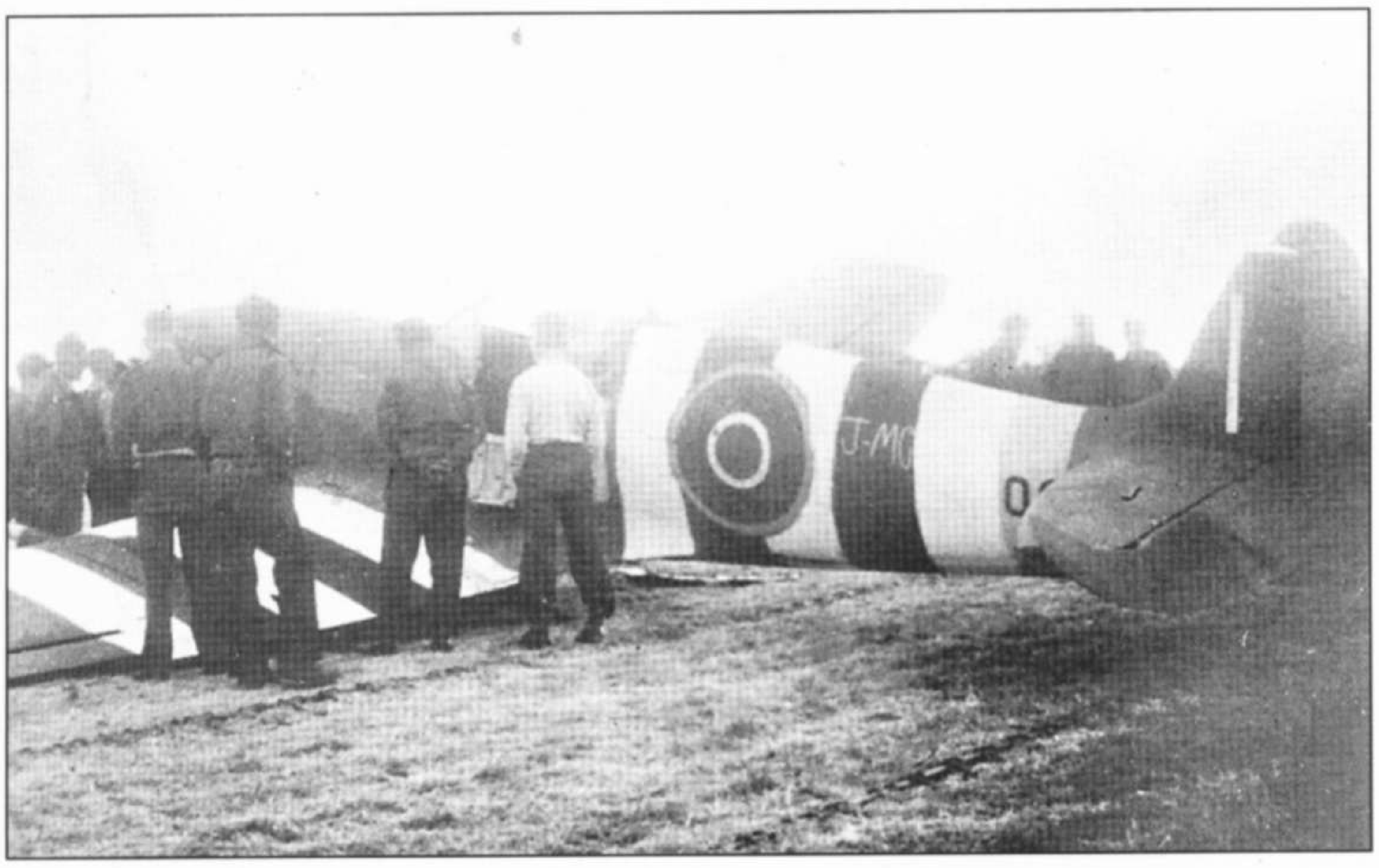
'NO BALL' OPERATIONS

"We would receive detailed information about the particular V1 site from our Intelligence Officer, originally obtained from aerial reconnaissance and the French or Dutch Resistance. Often we would have actual photographs taken by the Resistance in addition to aerial

Maurice Colgan Mayston as a young pilot in England, 1943. Born 26 June 1921, he grew up in Nelson, NZ, and post war made his career in the Banking Industry. He is married to Pamela and they have three children, Christina, Richard and Deborah. Maurice Mayston is now retired, living in Wellington New Zealand. (M Mayston)



The group of 485 Squadron pilots who flew the Squadrons mission near Paris on 18 July 1944. From the left, back row: Warrant Officer 'Mick' Esdaile, Flying Officer 'Pat' Patterson and Pilot Officer Doug Clarke. Front row: Flight Lieutenant 'Lyn' Black, Flight Lieutenant 'Chalkie' White, Warrant Officer Athol Downer, Squadron Leader Johnnie Niven, Pilot Officer 'Robbie' Robinson, Flight Lieutenant 'Mac' Ralph, Flying Officer 'Jook' De Jourret and Flying Officer Maurice Mayston. Note the Squadron Leaders rank badge under the exhaust. (M Mayston)



Another formation covering the Invasion beaches was 142 Wing, based at the Temporary Landing Ground, Horne, Surrey. This Spitfire LF Mk Vc was flown by Wing Commander John Milne Checketts, a New Zealander, Wing Leader of 142 Wing. All three squadrons in Checketts Wing were still Mk V equipped in June 1944. It consisted of: 130 Squadron RAF (Mk Vs until August 1944), 303 (Polish) 'Kosciuszko' Squadron (Mk Vs until April 1945) and 402 (RCAF) 'City of Winnipeg' Squadron (Mk Vs until July 1944).

AB509 blew a tire taking off from Horne's grass runway and the tire wound its way up the oleo leg, making it impossible to retract the undercarriage. Wing Commander Checketts landed the Spitfire and as quickly as they could, the ground crews changed the entire port wing. This was not considered a major job by them.

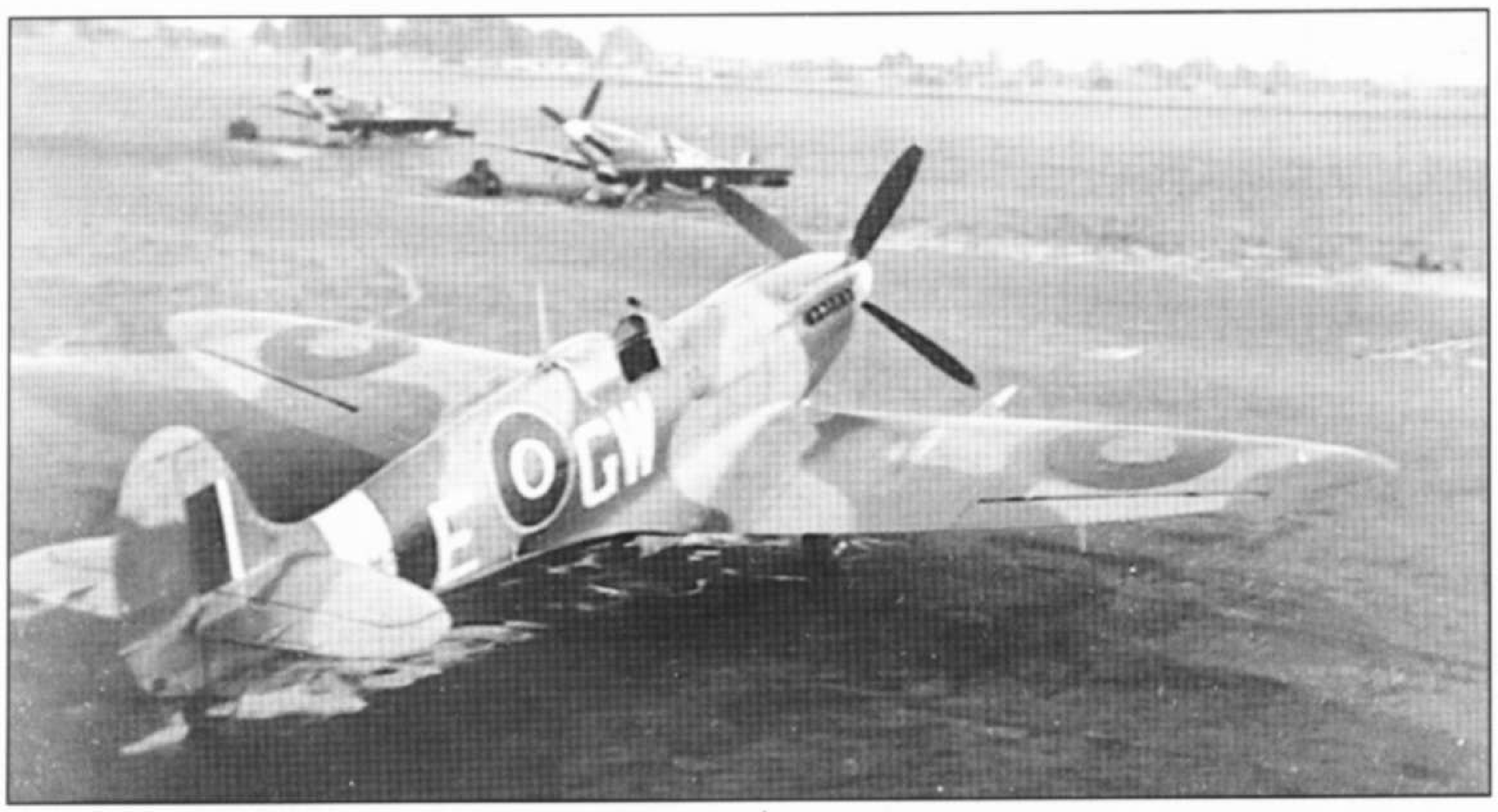
Checketts flew a total of four sorties on D-day in this Spitfire Mk V. Note that the Invasion stripes have been applied over his code letters of 'J-MC' and these have simply been chalked onto the black stripe behind the fuselage roundel. The aircraft has late 'c' wing narrow cannon bulges; the outer cannon cover stubs have been removed and it has been refurbished with tailplanes of increased horn balance area.

AB509 was listed as being part of 402 (RCAF) Squadron's complement from 22 May 1944, until being passed to 53 OTU on 29 September 1944[1]. (J M Checketts)

photos. Generally we would attack over a hill or wooded area at low altitude to deceive the enemy radar. We would fly an indirect route to the target so as to make our intended target less obvious, strafing suitable targets of opportunity on the way, provided they were under our flight path. If we knew that the intended target was built of concrete, the incendiary round would be dispensed with, there being no point in carrying them.

Generally we would attack in pairs while the entire Squadron circled the target; the idea being that attacks would come in quick succession from all points of the compass, to keep the defenders heads down and would be coordinated to be completed in a matter of seconds. The V1 sites were generally well defended by flak batteries and we depended on speed and surprise to survive. After making your pass you would pull up in a spiral, never straight as this would make you an easier target.

Compared with the likes of the Hawker Typhoon and Tempest, the Spitfire had a small frontal area and you could 'jink' and 'weave' your way in, then pull out low over the target because the Spitfire had so little 'squash' as you pulled out. 'Squash' is really a high speed stall, as when you pull out of a dive the wings angle of attack can become so great that lift is not generated. A Typhoon and Tempest was much faster but would have to pull out earlier to avoid literally 'squashing' into the ground. Because we were able to make our attack so sudden and brief, combined with a sharp climbing turn exiting the target area,



Another of the many Spitfire squadrons preparing to move to France after the Invasion was 340 (French) Squadron based at RAF Perranporth, Cornwall, April 1944. This Spitfire Mk IXc, 'GW-E' appears to be polished for extra speed and wears a standard RAF Day Fighter colour scheme. Note the cross-of-Lorraine on a shield which appeared on the Squadron's Spitfires. (SHAA) we suffered relatively few casualties attacking the V1 sites. Another technique was to slide sideways at a target so that your nose was not pointing directly at it, this was most deceptive for ground gunners and you would line up correctly at the last moment.

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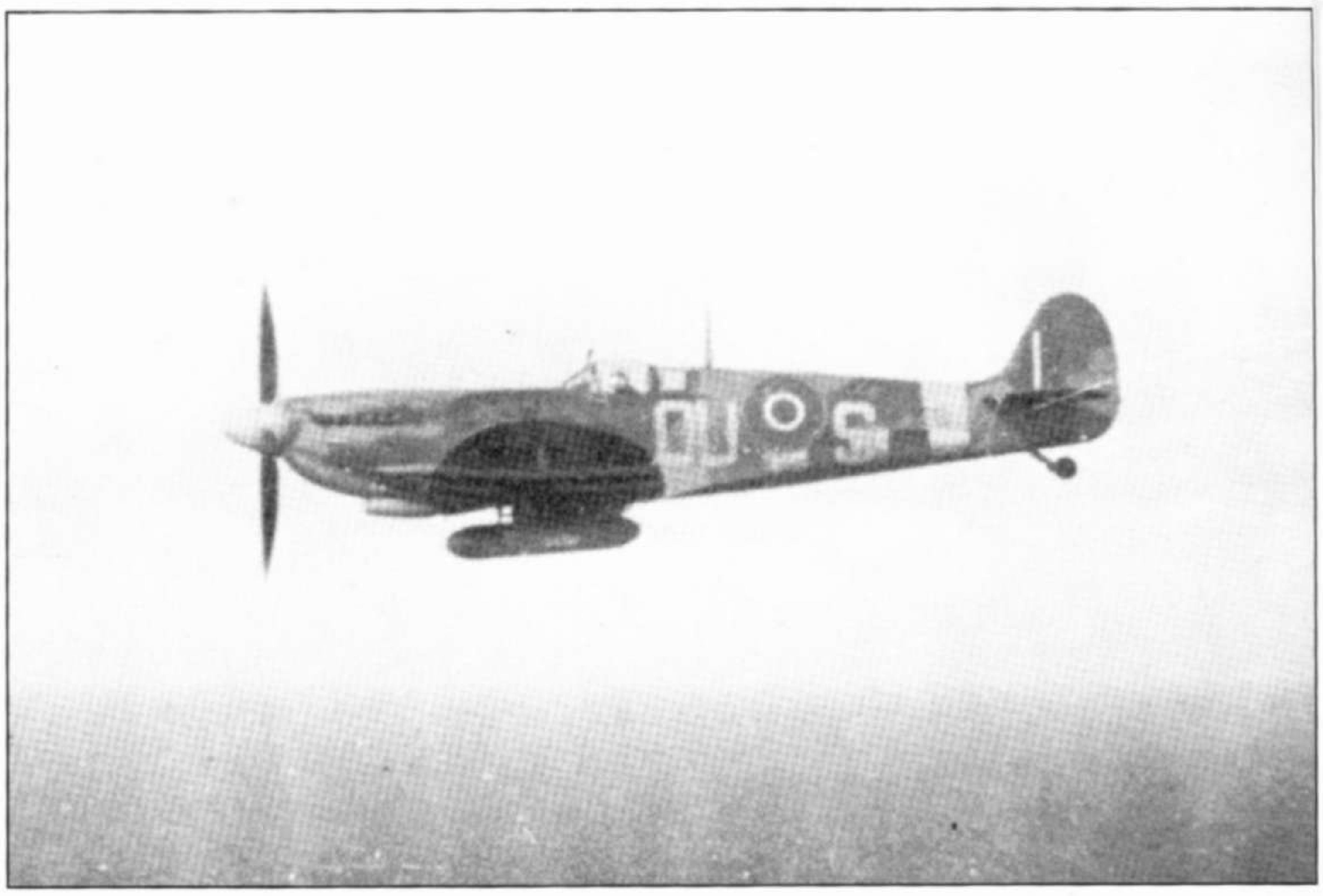
[1] Morgan and Shacklady, 1987.

485 Squadron received the new gyro gun sight in March 1944 while stationed at Llanbedr in North Wales. All you had to do was set the range of your target correctly using a twist grip on the control stick and then line up the sight on your target. The sight made all the calculations for deflection."


A Spitfire Mk IXc from 485 (NZ) Squadron heads for Normandy and another patrol, August 1944. Note the 60 gallon 'cigar' shaped drop tank which 485 squadron preferred to the close fitting slipper tank, because it dropped free of the aircraft more reliably. This photo has been published elsewhere captioned as being taken in June 1944, but that is incorrect. (via M Mayston)

D-DAY SUCCESS

"Like many other RAF Spitfire Squadrons, 485's job on D-Day was to patrol an assigned area of the beachhead and ward off enemy fighters. Maurice Mayston recalls, "On D-Day we were woken very early, 2AM, for briefing. At 5AM it was first light and I recall the excitement of being strapped in the cockpit, starting up and taxiing out, it was *all go*, a wonderful sensation.

I was still quite new on the Squadron and flew as Number 2 to my flight leader, Flight Lieutenant Johnnie Houlton. The second pair making up the flight were Keith Macdonald, an experienced ex-North Africa pilot and Eddie Atkins, also quite new. In his excitement Johnnie cut a corner while taxiing out for takeoff, running over a field telephone at the end of the runway and damaging his propeller (of ML407). Part of the problem in taxiing a Spitfire was that you had to progress by zig-zaging so as to see past the nose. (Houlton eventually got into the air ten minutes later flying reserve aircraft MK950 'OU-X', for this first operation of the day.)

As the Squadron climbed and formed up I ran through the usual checks and discovered that my drop tank release mechanism was not operating. I should have returned to base – but I wanted to see this wonderful Invasion Fleet. When we were ordered to drop our external tanks approaching our designated patrol area, I had to report my problem and turn back. I did this most reluctantly with the awful feeling of all the wasted training, the waiting and anticipation of D-Day.

My second flight of the day was after lunch at 2.45PM. The visibility was not good, with a thick layer of cloud from Paris to the beachhead. This was perfect

Two ground crew members of 453 (RAAF) Squadron work on a Spitfire Mk IX soon after D-Day. (S Mackenzie)

Spitfire Mk IX 'OU-D' NH432 was the aircraft usually flown by Pilot Officer Max Collett in December 1944. He named it 'Waipawa Special' after the town of Waipawa. When 485 (NZ) Squadron's base at Maldeghem, Belgium, was strafed by Messerschmitt Bf109s, as part of the Luftwaffe's Operation Bödenplatte, on New Years day 1945, NH432 along with ten other Spitfires of the Squadron were completely destroyed. They had been ready for take-off, with 90 gallon drop tanks fitted, for a bomber escort mission which was delayed. The result was two neat lines of Spitfires, easily set on fire. Twelve new Spitfires were delivered as replacements the next day. (Authors collection)

for the Germans who could fly in cloud all the way to the beachhead, drop down and make strafing runs and drop their bombs, then escape back into the cloud. My flight leader, Johnnie Houlton (this time flying ML407) was something of an individualist. So, although the squadrons three flights were detailed to patrol over the beachhead, Johnnie disregarded this and led us further inland where he believed we would be likely to find enemy aircraft. Sure enough, Johnnie's keen eyes spotted a Ju 88 drop out of the cloud and he intercepted it and shot it down. The usual method with a Ju 88 was to knock out the starboard engine, from which ran all its electrical systems, then move in finish it off. This straightforward victory proved to be the first German aircraft shot down on D-Day. One of the Spitfires problems was that it only carried a small amount of ammunition, so you had to make every shot count. About ten minutes later he saw another Ju 88 and, although it made off at full speed, Johnnie caught it and again knocked out the starboard engine. Then the other members of the flight made passes in turn. I fired at the rear gunner and was most uncomfortable to discover that his return fire was very accurate. I could hear bangs and clunks as my aircraft was hit. At the same time I could see with the few shots that I fired I must have got him, but he still kept firing back. Then the flights second pair of Keith Macdonald and Eddie Atkins made passes and between us we finished off this second Ju 88. This was the only time I ever had the opportunity to use my guns on an enemy aircraft."

WALCHEREN ISLAND PATROL

"On 1 November 1944, the Squadron was part of the Invasion cover over Walcheren Island in the Scheldt Estuary, Holland. We were patrolling our particular piece of sky when one of our pilots exclaimed, 'Goodness! I've just seen a 16" shell pass in front of me.' Another pilot reported one too and we realised that our patrol height and position was at the trajectory apex of the battleship guns, which were bombarding the Islands defences. Fortunately none of our 'planes were hit, but we were not amused that some idiot had us patrolling at that height.

Later that day the Squadron organisation moved from Merville in France to Maldeghem in Holland. Our airfield organisation was totally self contained, including everything from doctors and sick quarters to spare parts. By late that afternoon we were operational at Maldeghem. The Germans never seemed to equal this ability for mobility."

ARMED RECCE TO GERMANY

"In early 1945, on an Armed Reconnaissance in the Rhine/Osnabruk area we had a reasonably successful sweep, attacking three trains. But I had to switch from external drop tank to internal fuel half way to our target area, which meant that I would be low on fuel compared to everyone else. I suppose I should have turned back, but I hoped it was a leak in my external tank and so decided to stay with the Squadron.

After our attacks we reformed and I realised that I did not have enough fuel to reach our base, but I certainly didn't want to crash-land in Germany. Anyone shot down there was not getting a very nice reception at that stage of the war! I advised the Squadron Leader my situation and throttled right back and let myself drop behind the Squadron. I was still at 20,000 ft and prayed that I would not be bounced by enemy fighters as I assumed a kind of powered glide back towards our lines. My fuel actually ran out at 7,000 ft, but I was quite close to our territory and called up on the emergency radio channel and asked for an emergency landing field. Immediately the calm voice of a female radar controller came back that she had me on her screen and confirmed my course and speed. I knew that I could glide one mile for each 1,000 ft of height lost, which meant I could (in theory) travel another seven miles. Within a few seconds she advised me of a new American airstrip being cut in a pine forest about seven miles away.

I was now being fired at by German anti-aircraft guns but could not weave to avoid it because this would cost me valuable height. Luckily I crossed over into our territory and the ack-ack stopped before I was hit. I could see this little pine forest and carefully glided for it. As I approached I could hear the pilot of an American Republic Thunderbolt on the radio calling 'Mayday, Mayday' that he only had 15 minutes of fuel and needed to land at this very strip The lady radar operator had advised me that this strip was still under construction, but that the earth moving machinery would be moved to one side by the time I got there. You've got to hand it to the Americans, they already had an Airfield Control Pilot (ACP) there in a mobile vehicle fitted for the job. He could talk to me and to the Thunderbolt and I could also hear the Thunderbolt pilot. He apparently, could not hear me and we could

A typical mobile airfield control vehicle. This one was owed by 165 Squadron in England. 165 specialised in bomber escort and operated Spitfire Mk IXs, until it converted to Mustangs in January 1945. (W Marr)

This 485 (NZ) Squadron Spitfire Mk IX crash landed at Merville after returning from a dive bombing mission to Dunkirk, just outside Normandy, on 5 April 1945. The pilot, Warrant Officer Athol Downer, is seen inspecting the aircraft with one of his ground crew. The landing strip being used at the time was quite rough and so a Spitfire could easily nose-over. On this occasion the aircraft either had some flak damage to the undercarriage or a flat tyre and when Downer landed the undercarriage simply gave way. (M Mayston)

not talk to each other. The ACP explained to me that he would hold the Thunderbolt until I had glided in and landed. By this time I could see the narrow landing strip in the forest and the large earth moving machines scuttling into the forest. I was warned that the surface was rough, although some steel matting had been laid on the soft earth. But the Thunderbolt pilot refused to wait and he was coming in opposite to my direction! He was landing in the correct direction indicated by an arrow on the ground, but I simply had to come straight in by the shortest route. I could hear the ACP ordering the Thunderbolt to go around, then he fires red warning flares at it, but the pilot ignored those too. As I just cleared the trees around the strip and raised my nose, flaring for the landing the last thing I saw was the Thunderbolt, two tons heavier than me, straight ahead. I figured that he would keep to the right and did the same hoping that, he being a larger plane, his wing would pass over mine. And that is what happened. I was aware of the Thunderbolt wing travelling over my cockpit.

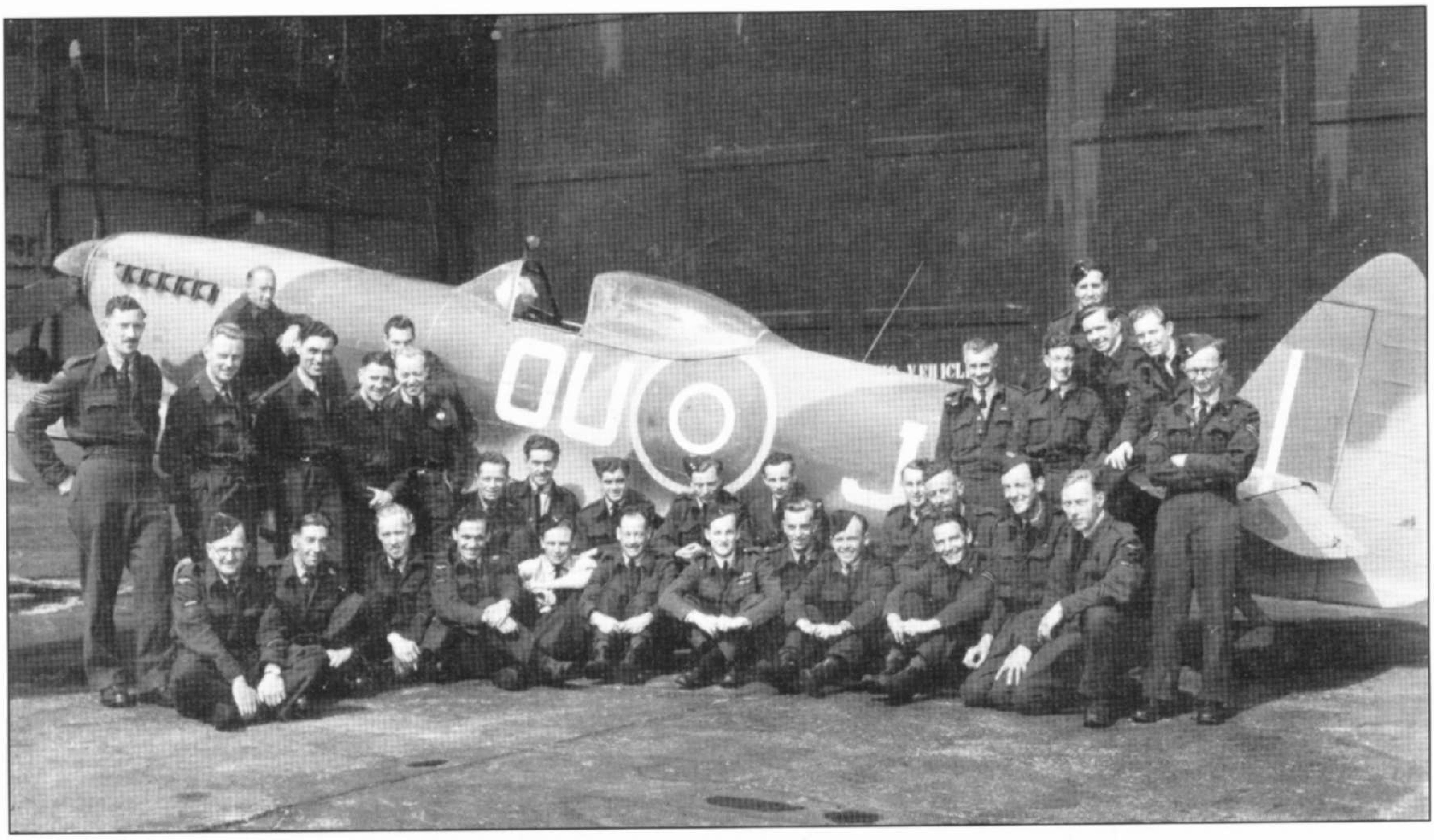
I felt pretty angry with this guy. He had been told that I would be towed off and he would then have a clear runway. Also, he still had 15 minutes of fuel left, so there was no real problem for him to wait.

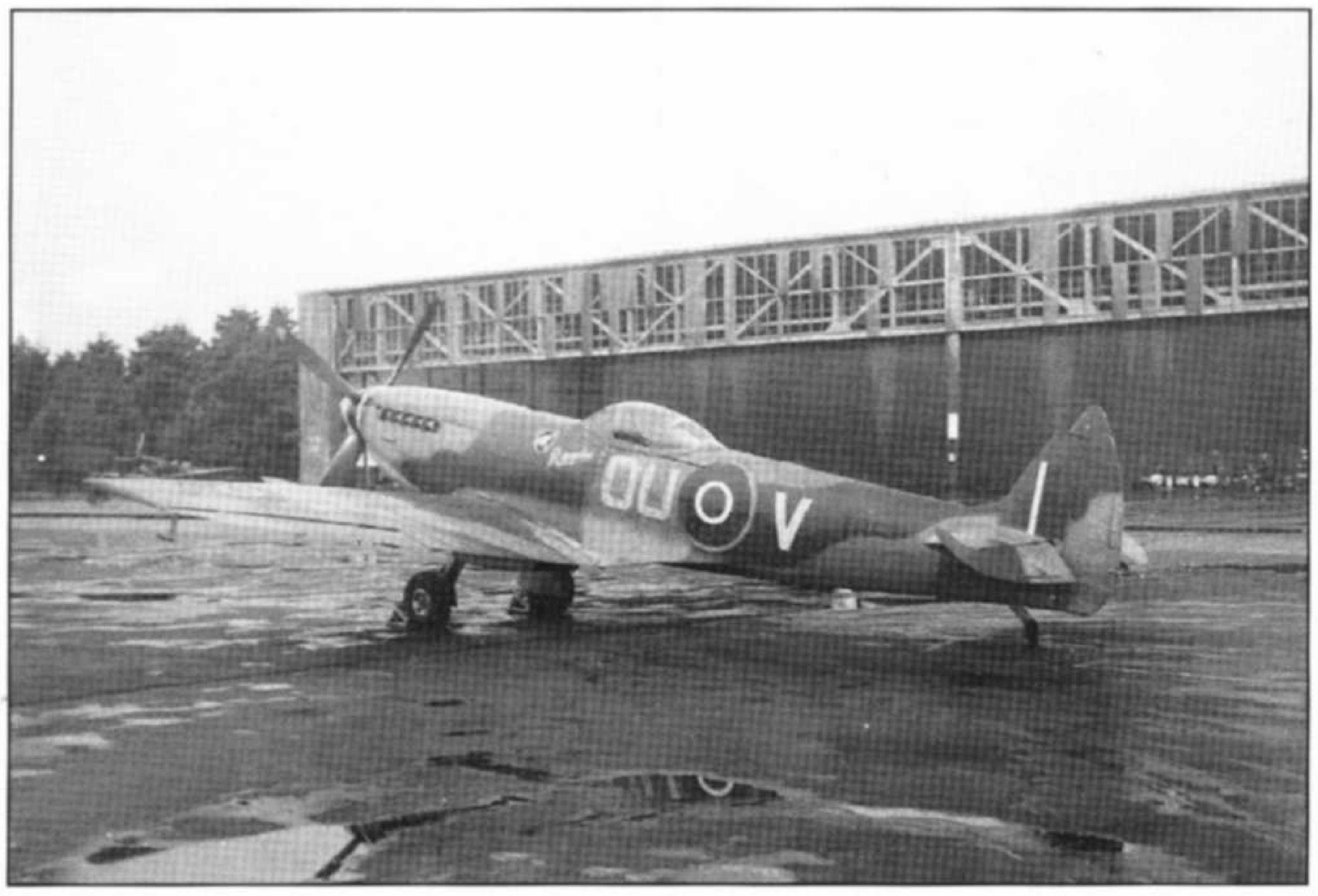
The Americans were so well organised on this partly built forward air strip. By the time I stopped rolling a 'mule' vehicle came and hooked up to tow me clear. I looked down the runway fuming at this other idiot pilot to see a jeep drive up to the Thunderbolt and two red helmeted MPs, with guns drawn, drag the poor guy out of his cockpit like a sack of coal. They really were very rough with him and handcuffed him behind his back, threw him into their jeep and drove away. They were so rough I almost felt sorry for the guy. I then identified myself to the ACP as the Germans were thought to be flying about in captured Allied aircraft. He was most apologetic about the Thunderbolt pilot and they took me to their Mess and gave he a beautiful meal.

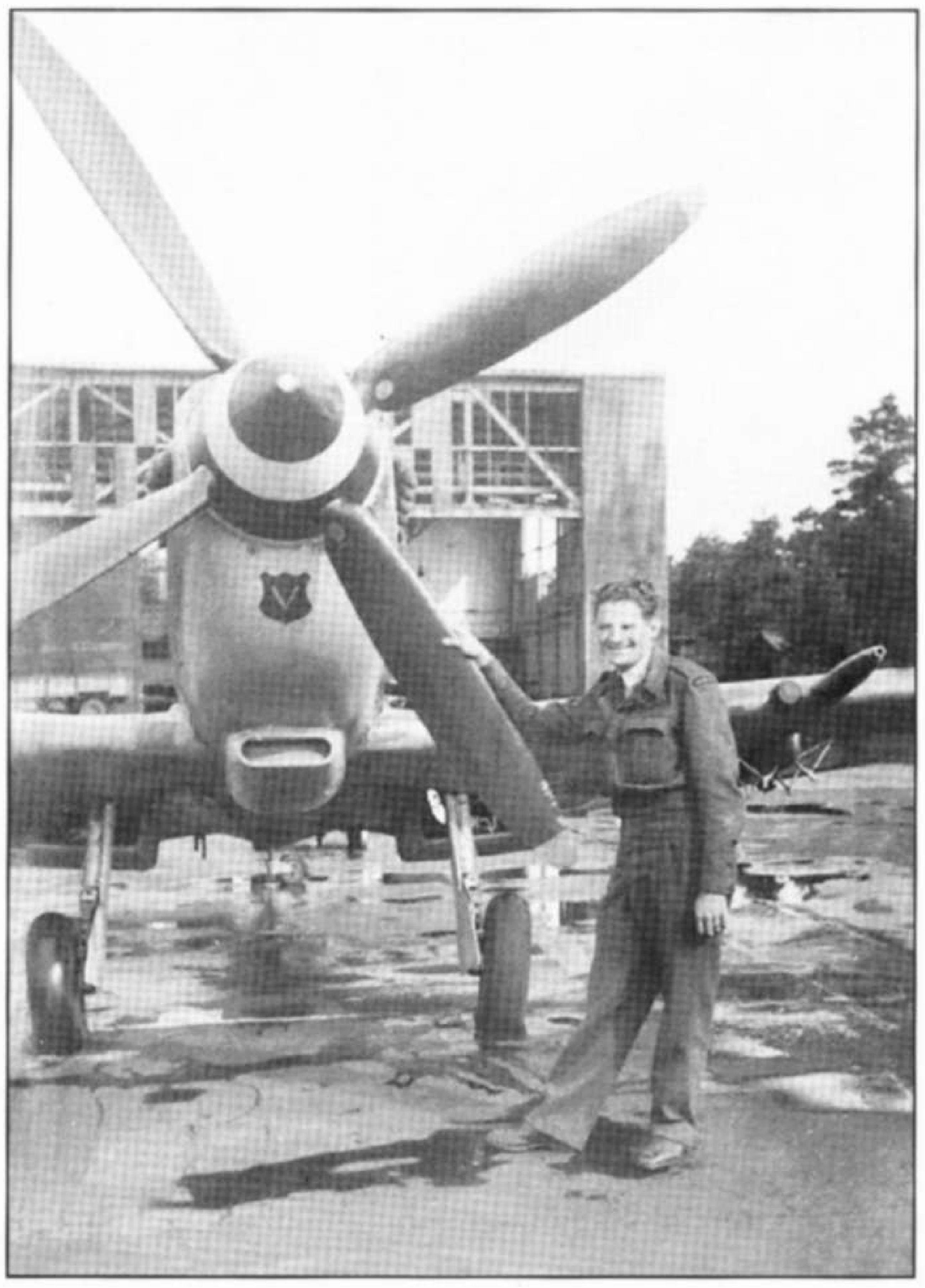
Here they were just a few miles from the front line and they had everything, including 100 octane fuel for my aircraft and even offered

No. 485 (NZ) Squadron ground crew members, in front of Mk XVI 'OU-J' at Fassberg. Squadron Leader Stan Brown, the only pilot present, is seventh from left, front row.

"We found that the licence build Packard Merlin engine MK XVI was 20 mph slower than the Rolls Royce engine Mk IX, although the Packard was a smoother running engine. To allow the Packard to be mass produced by the American car company, manufacturing tolerances had been relaxed and our ground crew had more trouble keeping them serviceable because of the reduced specification. We got to the stage where we were losing more aircraft to crashes than enemy action, so were glad to eventually return to Rolls Royce Mk IXs. However we did like the all-round vision of the Mk XVI's bubble canopy, and eventually received some bubble top MK IXs as well."
(M Mayston)



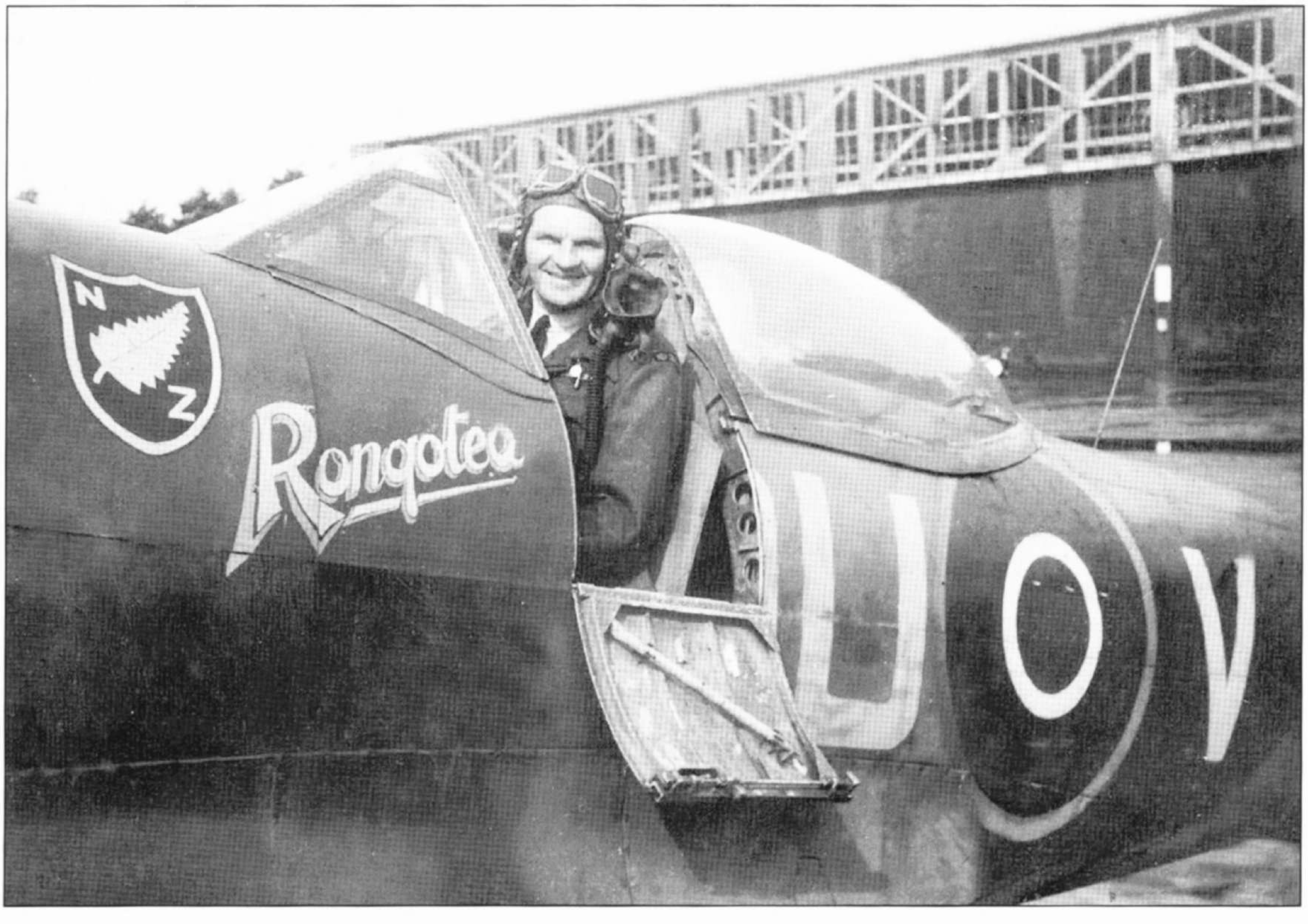




for me to stay the night and celebrate my survival. However I thanked them, refuelled and returned to my own base. We thought our RAF airfield mobility was good but what I saw there was amazing. At this forward area they had everything conceivable to run an airstrip. As it turned out I had a fractured metal fuel pipe in the belly of my aircraft.

In February 1945, 485 Squadron was withdrawn from combat and returned to England, to re-equip with Hawker Tempests. However this idea was abandoned, partly because the pilots disliked the heavy Tempest, which was so different to their nimble Spitfires. They returned to the Continent in April 1945, with Spitfires. The Squadron was disbanded at Fassberg, on 26 August, 1945.

The photographs on this page are all of Warrant Officer Murray J C Lind and his Spitfire Mk XVI named 'Rongotea' with the New Zealand fern leaf emblem. They were taken while 485 (NZ) Squadron was based at Fassberg, Germany, June-August 1945. The preserved Spitfire Mk XVI in the RNZAF's museum in Christchurch, NZ, is painted in these markings. (A Lind)



FLYING FOR TWO AIR FORCES

616 SQUADRON, RAF

The RAF's 616 Squadron was equipped with the rare Spitfire Mk VII and was initially detailed to provide high altitude fighter protection over the Normandy beaches in June 1944.

On 30 November 1943, Flying Officer Jack Cleland rejoined 616 Squadron at Exeter to begin his second combat tour. Flying commenced with a sector reconnaissance in a Spitfire Mk VI on 4 December. However, within two days he had his first flight in the far superior Mk VII, Supermarine's second high altitude interceptor version of the Spitfire, which was to take him through the hectic period of the Allied Invasion of Occupied France.

The Mk VII first become operational with 124 Squadron at North Weald in May 1943. This version retained the Mk VI's extended wing tips, intake scoop for the cockpit blower on the starboard engine cowling and was armed with the same two 20mm cannon and four 303 machine guns. However, the airframe was strengthened and fitted with a more powerful Merlin 61 (1,565hp, EW serials) or Merlin 64 (1,710hp, MB serials). The latter engine provided a top speed of 408 mph at 25,000 ft and a ceiling of 43,000 ft. A broad chord pointed rudder and retractable tailwheel were visual features. Most had strengthened wings and ailerons of reduced span to make aileron flutter less likely. More significantly, the pressurised cockpit was improved by providing a sliding canopy. The Spitfire Mk VIIs fuel capacity was greatly increased by fitted enlarged main fuel tanks holding 96 gallons and two 14 gallon tanks on the leading edge of the wings, inboard of the cannon. This provided a range of 1,180 miles, 40 percent more than any other Merlin engine Spitfire operated in Britain.

Though designed to combat Luftwaffe high altitude bombing and reconnaissance intrusions over Britain; the few Spitfire Mk VII squadrons were rarely called upon to use their high altitude capability. However the extended range capability, which could see the stoic pilot seated on a numbing parachute pack for nearly four hours, was later put to use; particularly on long range bomber escort operations and low level search and destroy operations. 140 Spitfire Mk VII's were built in the Southampton area between August 1942 and May 1944, and most pilots remembered it with affection:

'All the pilots I have dealt with said it was one of the most beautiful aircraft they had flown.'[1]

TRAIN BUSTING SPITFIRES

In preparation for the Allied Invasion of Normandy, 616 Squadron, under Squadron Leader Watts, was moved south to Culmhead, near Taunton, Somerset, in mid-May. They were soon joined by 131 Squadron, also operating the Spitfire Mk VII. Together with 41 Squadron (equipped with the Griffon engine Spitfire Mk XII), they were known as the Culmhead Wing and were led by Wing Commander Peter Brothers, DFC and bar (an ex Battle of Britain Hurricane pilot with an impressive number of victories).

It was planned for the Wing to provide top cover for the Invasion (though of course the Wing was unaware of what was about to unfold on 6 June 1944). Prior to the Invasion the Wing patrolled around

Jack McGifford Cleland was born on 29 December 1913, in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

With the outbreak of War Jack applied to join the Royal New Zealand Navy and was declined. He then decided to be a fighter pilot. Being nearly 27 years old and without even one complete year of high school education, the Royal New Zealand Air Force also rejected him. But Jack kept pestering them and the RNZAF finally relented. After many weeks of intensive study he passed the Air Force entrance exam with a mark of 95 percent.

Leading Aircraftsman Cleland trained on the DH 82 Tiger Moth, Vickers Vincent and North American Harvard (and the ubiquitous Link Trainer). By mid-August, 1941, he had 138 hours 55 minutes in his log book, had gained his wings and was promoted to Sergeant. He then became one of the 10,950 New Zealanders who took the long voyage to England, to serve with the Royal Air Force during World War II.

Above, Flight Lieutenant Cleland poses with a Spitfire Mk VB while an Instructor at No. 53 OTU, Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire, late 1944 or early 1945. A 363rd FS patch is sewn above the pocket on his USAAF jacket.
(A Cleland)

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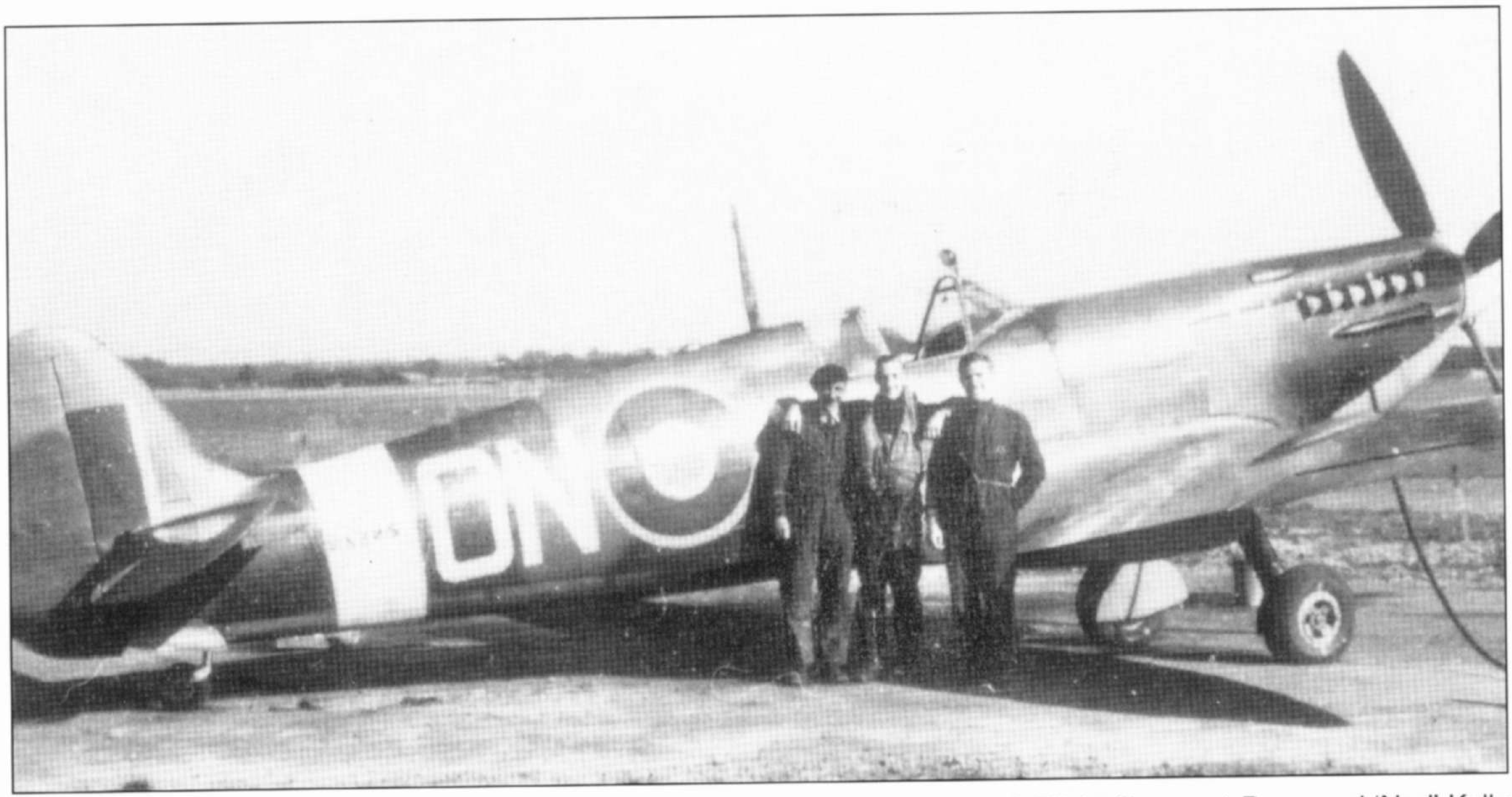
[1] This chapter is adapted from the book 'Jacks Adventures', by Tim Neilsen, which comprehensively covers Jack Cleland's wartime career. It is available directly from Tim Neilsen and is advertised inside the back cover.



Flight Sergeant Desmond 'Ned' Kelly and his ground crew with their Spitfire Mk VII, 'ON-Y', EN285 of 124 Squadron. Kelly was later posted to 616 Squadron on 18 March 1944, thereby remaining on Mk VIIs. From the left are: Maurie Ansell (rigger), Desmond Kelly, and Ernie Hunt (fitter). Apparently the two ground crew men held him in such high regard that the Spitfire was always kept highly polished for speed and whenever Des wasn't scheduled to fly, the aircraft mysteriously became 'unserviceable'. Note the long intake under the exhausts for the cockpit pressurisation blower. (D Kelly via T Neilsen)

Portland, undertook convoy patrols and paid close attention to the road and railway network of North West France; destroying military vehicles, locomotives and rolling stock.

By early June 1944, Jack Cleland had 26 combat operations of his second tour behind him. He had been promoted to Flight Lieutenant and married Isabel Figgis (whom he met returning from a posting in North Africa). On 4 June Jack made his last flight in his first personally named Spitfire. This was 'Isabel' a Mk VII coded 'YQ-P' MB215.

From then on Flight Lieutenant Cleland generally flew 'Isabel II', a Mk VII, MB106, coded 'YQ-W', through the hectic month of June 1944, as 616 Squadron were kept busy supporting the D-Day landings. He undertook two patrols on 5 June and another on 6 June in 'Isabel II', this being his first look at the Invasion Fleet. Later that afternoon he led a Flight in 'YQ-V', MB885 for 2 hours 25 minutes; destroying a staff car, two trucks and three locomotives.

The next morning flying 'YQ-R', Flight Lieutenant Cleland took off with seven other Spitfires, led by Squadron Leader Watts, to search for targets beyond the Invasion beaches. Cleland thrived on ground attack, destroying four locomotives and 15 railway wagons that day.

Two Aerial Victories

The pressure was kept relentlessly on the enemy (and the Culmhead Wing) with patrols over the beachhead and offensive fighter sweeps into France. The Germans were reported to have moved aircraft onto Le Mans and Laval airfields. The Wing, led by Wing Commander Brothers, took off at 1255 hours on 12 June to attack them. It was Flight Lieutenant Cleland's 125th combat operation and this day he was to fly 'YQ-X', MB768 with 23 other Spitfire VII's.

616 Squadron provided cover at 5,000 feet, while 131 Squadron strafed Le Mans, setting two aircraft on fire and damaging others. The Wing reformed and moved onto Laval for 616 Squadron's turn.

Laval would have received some warning and while diving on the airfield, Cleland told Squadron Leader Watts that an enemy aircraft was taking off. Cleland half rolled and identified his target as a Focke Wulf Fw 190 making a climbing turn to the left and retracting its undercarriage. Cleland followed and at 600 yards with 30 degrees deflection, fired. The Fw 190 faltered under the weight of fire, then fell away with a dead engine. Sweeping over the outskirts of Laval township and receiving attention from flak batteries, Flight Lieutenant Cleland turned back towards Laval airfield where he noticed aircraft milling about.

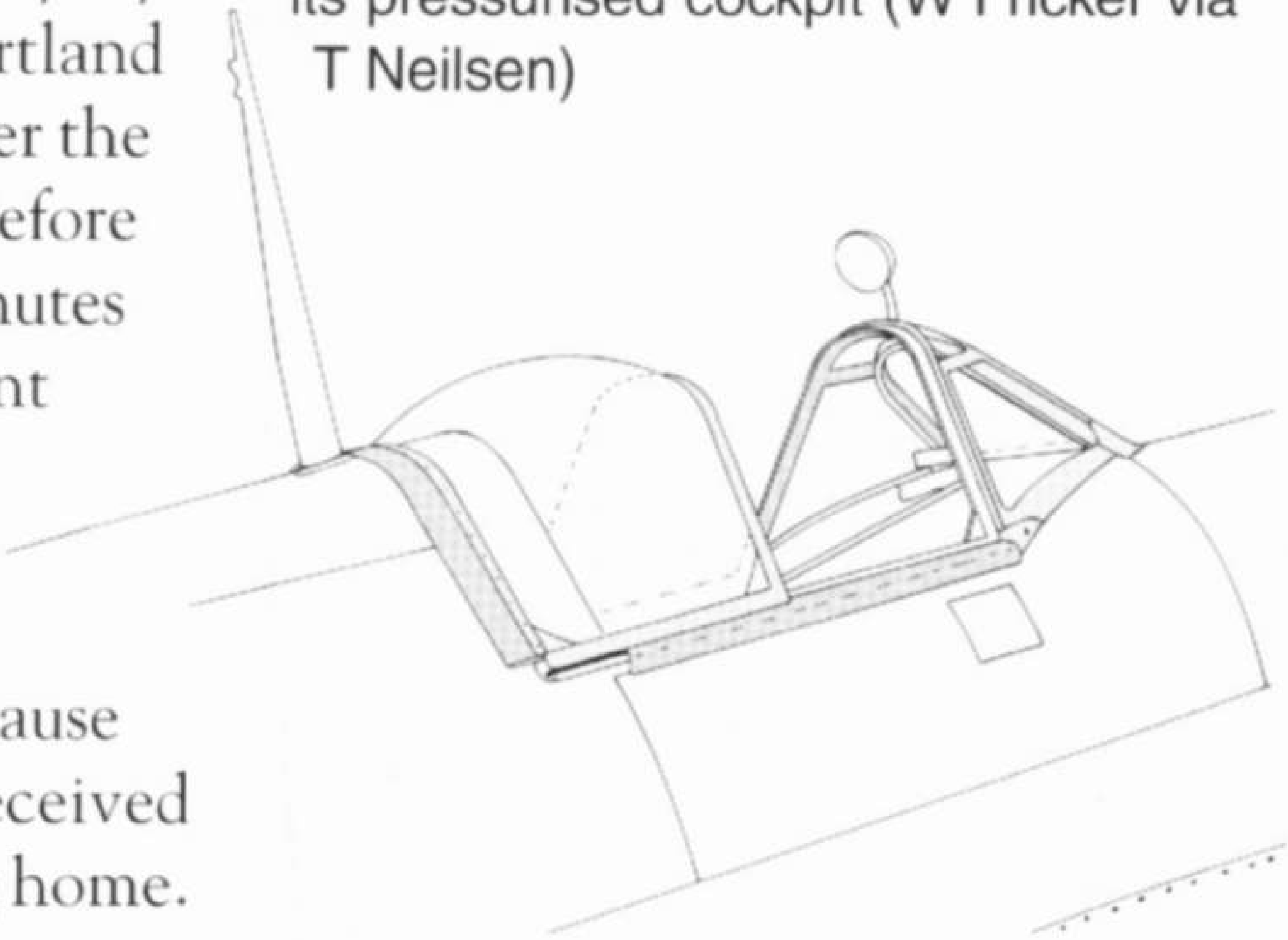
He observed a pair of Spitfires climbing away in close formation with a Fw 190 closing in from behind. Cleland couldn't radio a warning as they were too far away for him to read their code letters. In turn the enemy pilot did not see Cleland moving into position behind him. After checking that his own tail was clear, Cleland opened fire from dead astern at about 400 yards range. Hits were seen on the fuselage and wings. The Fw 190 rolled over and spiralled into the ground. Naturally jubilant with his first two victories he made the near fatal mistake of pulling up when on a heading back towards the town. He was engaged by medium flak which tore holes in the wing leading edges, cockpit and canopy, though somehow without injuring him. He put in a quick radio call to report the damage, before the radio failed and the engine began running roughly.

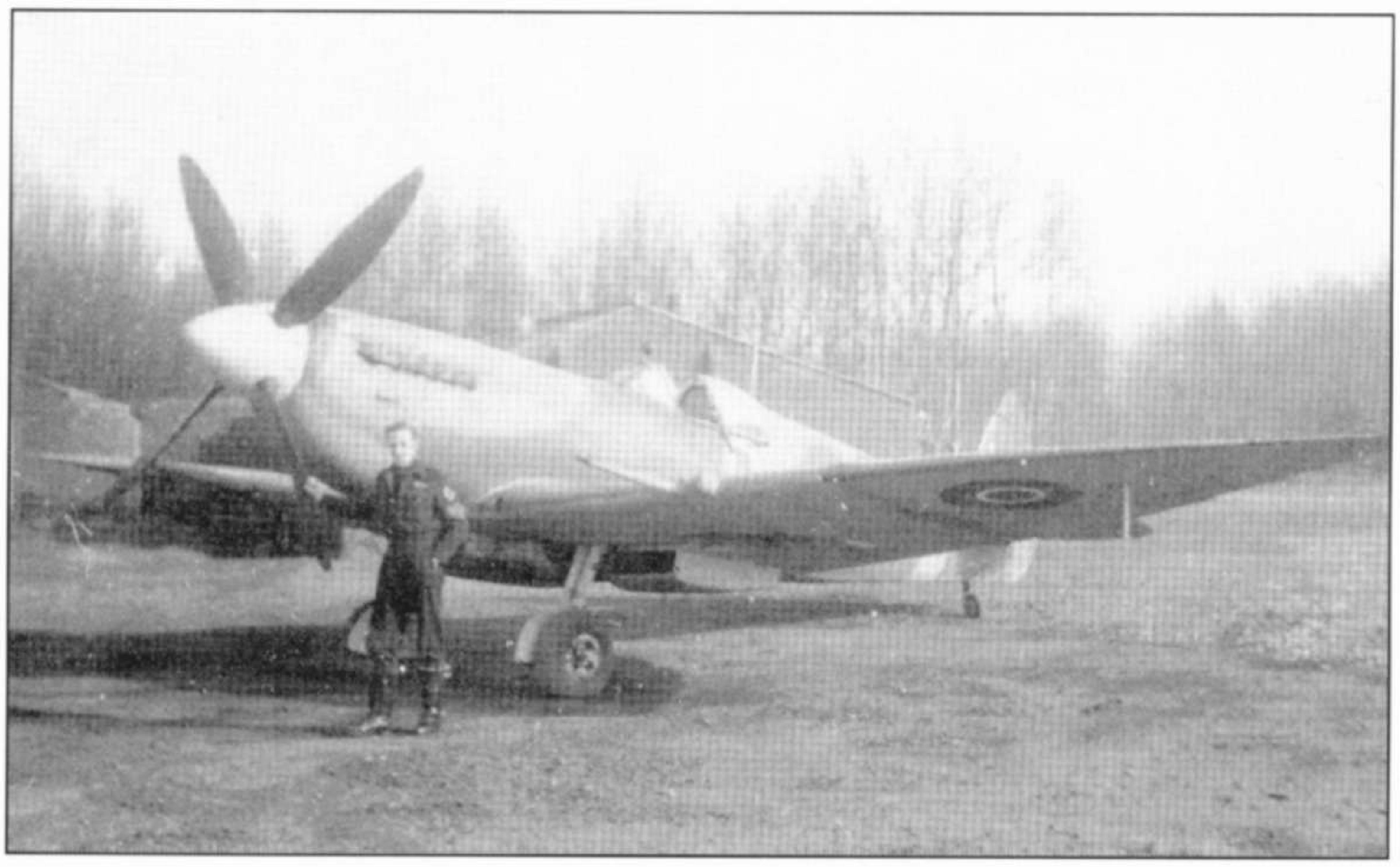
From 200-300 feet, Flight Lieutenant Cleland turned back towards England and, in spite of the damage, managed to climb and cross the French coast alone at 8,000 feet. At this stage he found his radio working and was able to receive a vector towards the English coast. However, the engine eventually cut out, so his next radio call was a 'Mayday' before he baled out at 5,000 feet about 12 miles south west of Portland Bill. He was fortunate to miss being hit by the tail as he went over the side. Landing in the sea he then had to cut away his parachute before it drowned him with its weight and tangle of lines. Within 15 minutes he was picked up by an Air Sea Rescue launch with the comment 'I'm certainly glad to see you chaps, the water's freezing'.

While this was happening, Isabel was at home (they boarded in a farm house near Taunton). The Squadron thought Jack Cleland was missing, but were reluctant to tell Isabel because she was four months pregnant with their first child. Later she received a couple of telephone calls saying Jack would be delayed coming home.

1st Lieutenant William Fricker in the cockpit of Spitfire Mk VII 'YQ-E' MD182, on 23 September at Leiston. Flight Lieutenant Cleland had taken it to show it to his American comrades of the 357th FG. 'We were all over it like a bunch of kids with a new toy!' said Fricker.

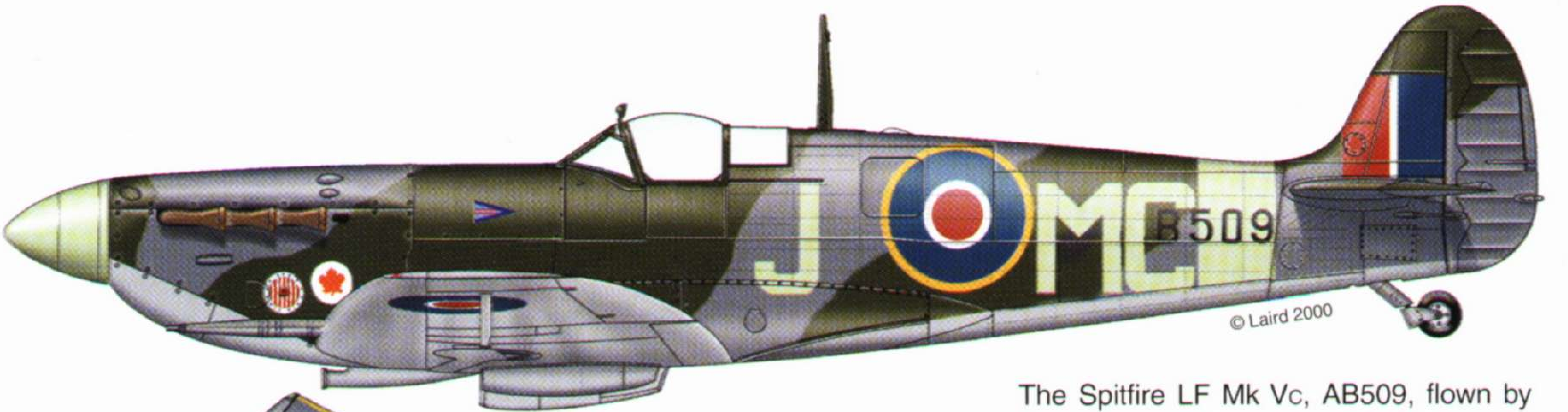
Note the lack of fold-down cockpit entry door and prominent guide rails for the sliding canopy, evident in the photo and illustration below. These were identifying features of the Mk VII with its pressurised cockpit (W Fricker via T Neilsen)



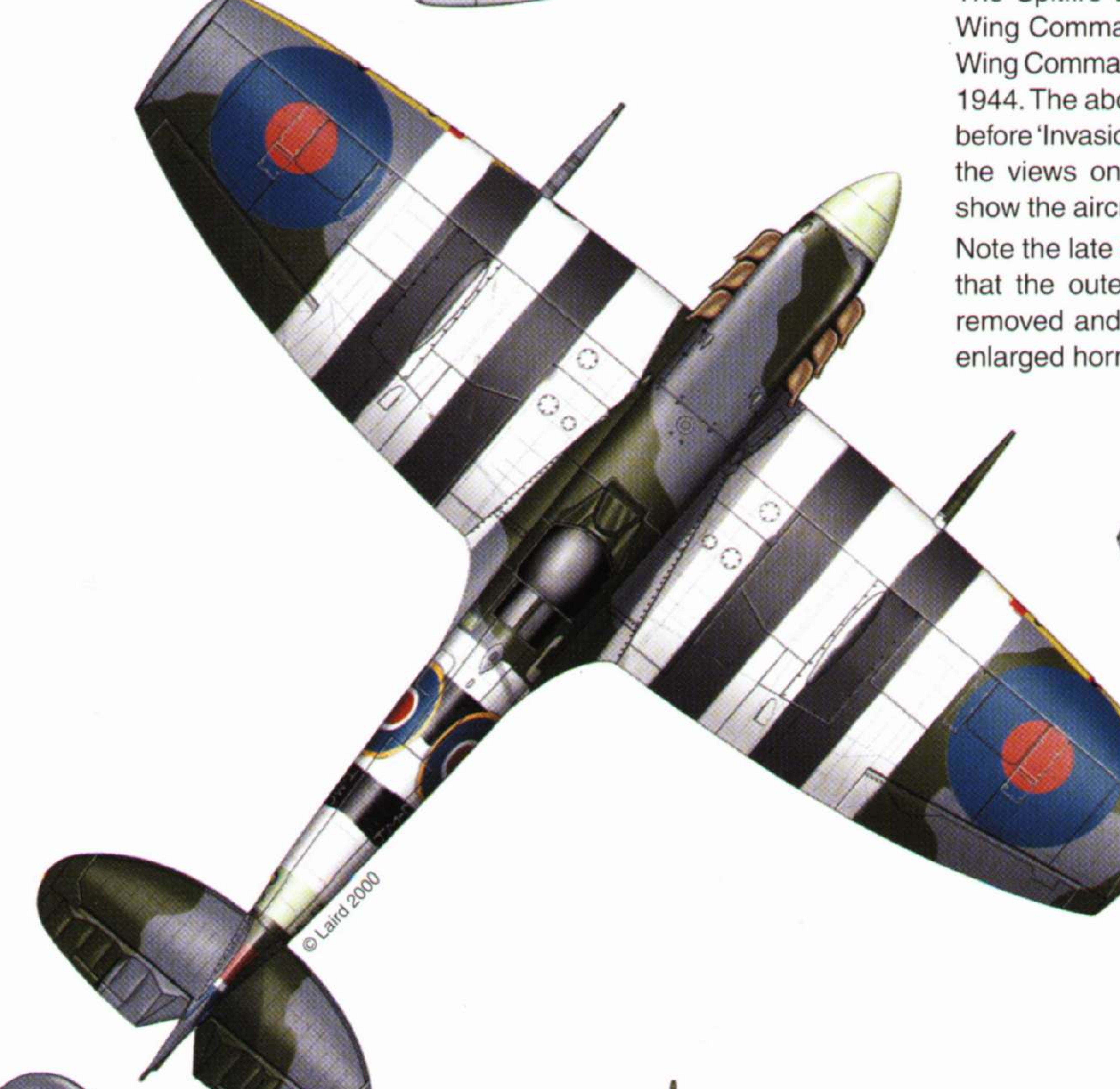


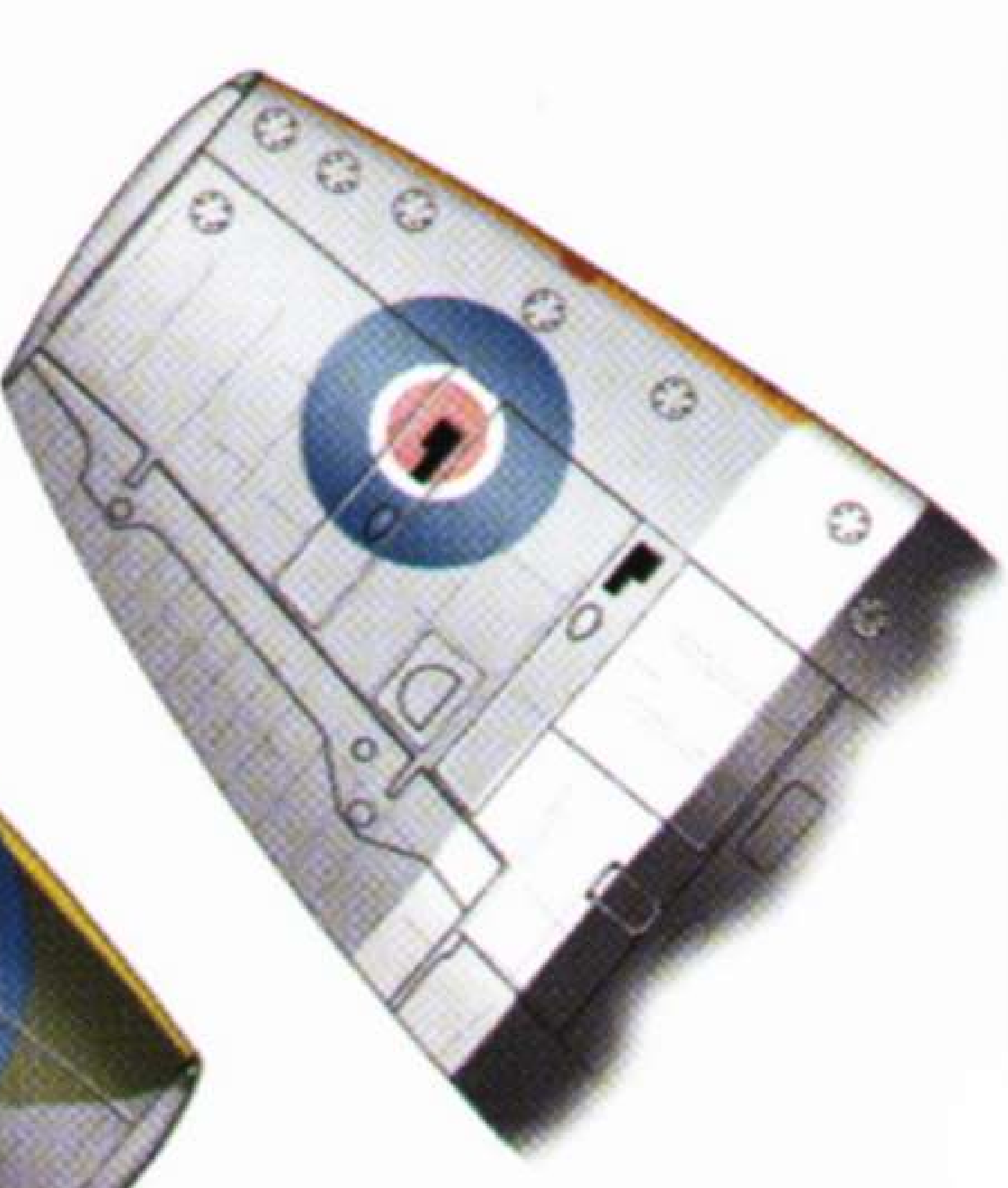
A port side view of Spitfire Mk VII 'ON-Y' of 124 Squadron at West Malling, February 1944. Flight Sergeant Chambers stands in front of the aircraft. Chambers was the first person to fly as a passenger in a Gloster Meteor when Flight Sergeant 'Ned' Kelly flew the jet, sitting on Chambers lap, for a most unauthorised flight.

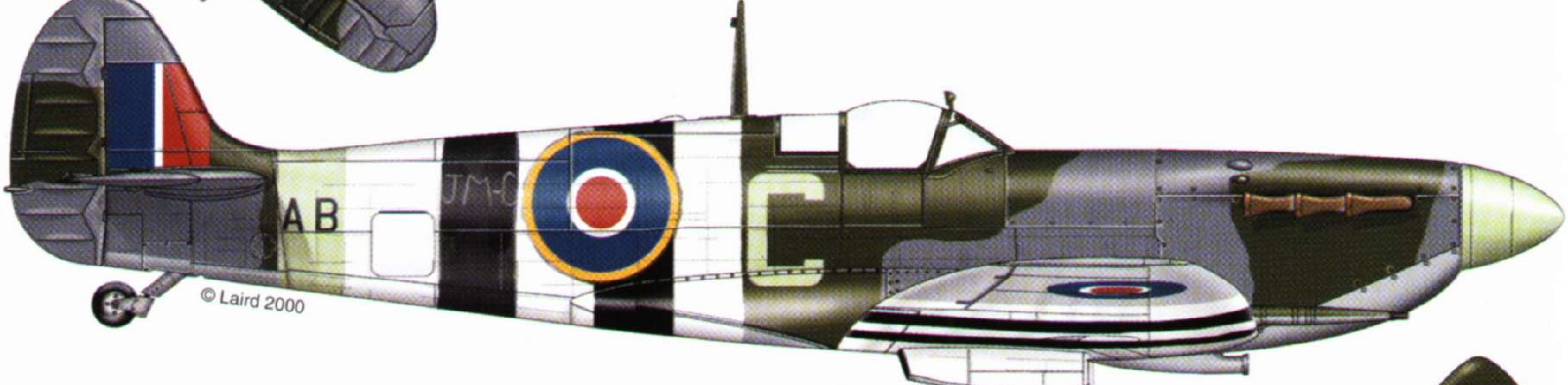
This photograph well illustrates the Mk VIIs extended wingtips. Within a few months of D-Day, with so many Mk VIIs employed in the ground attack role, most had been refitted with standard wingtips. (D kelly via T Neilsen)


J
MC
B509
© Laird 2000

The Spitfire LF Mk Vc, AB509, flown by Wing Commander John Milne Checketts, Wing Commander (Flying), 142 Wing, June 1944. The above illustration shows AB509 before 'Invasion' stripes were applied, while the views on the front cover and below show the aircraft as it appeared on D-Day. Note the late style 'c' wing cannon bulges, that the outer cannon stubs have been removed and the fitting of tailplanes with enlarged horn balance area.






AB
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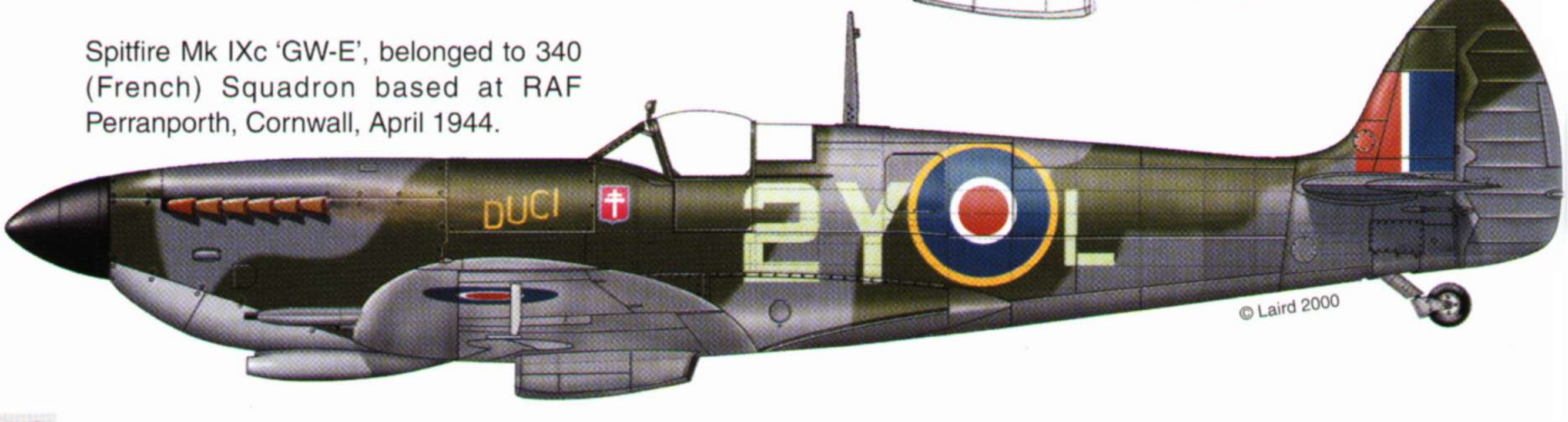
Spitfire Mk IXc 'GW-E', belonged to 340 (French) Squadron based at RAF Perranporth, Cornwall, April 1944.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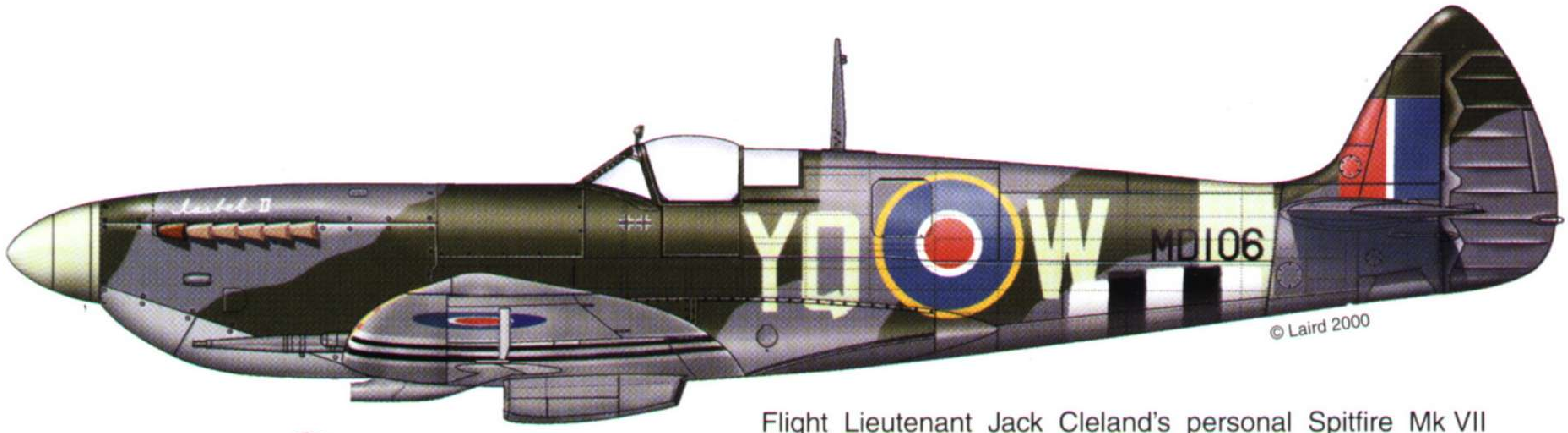
Isabel II
YQ W
MD106
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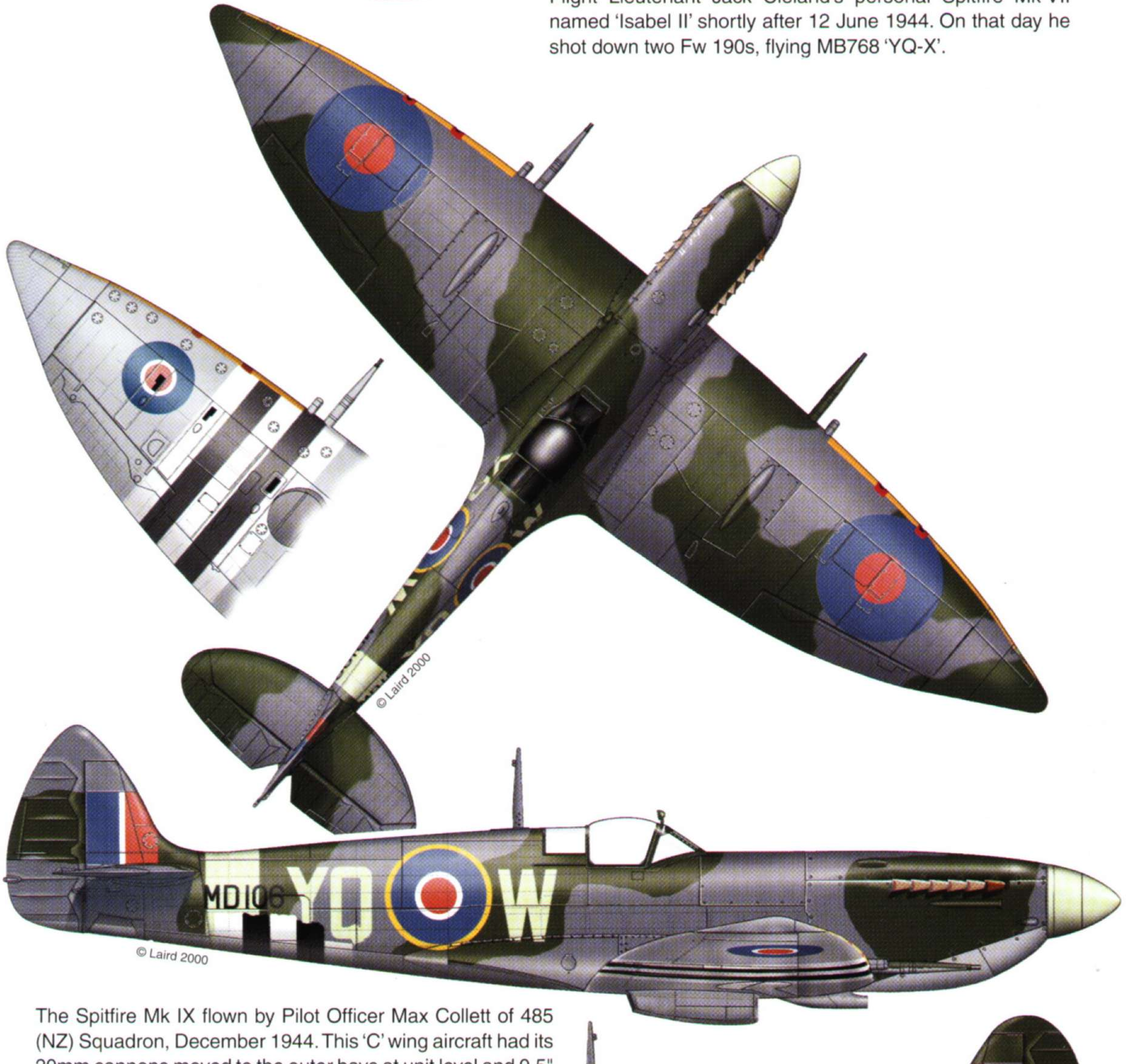
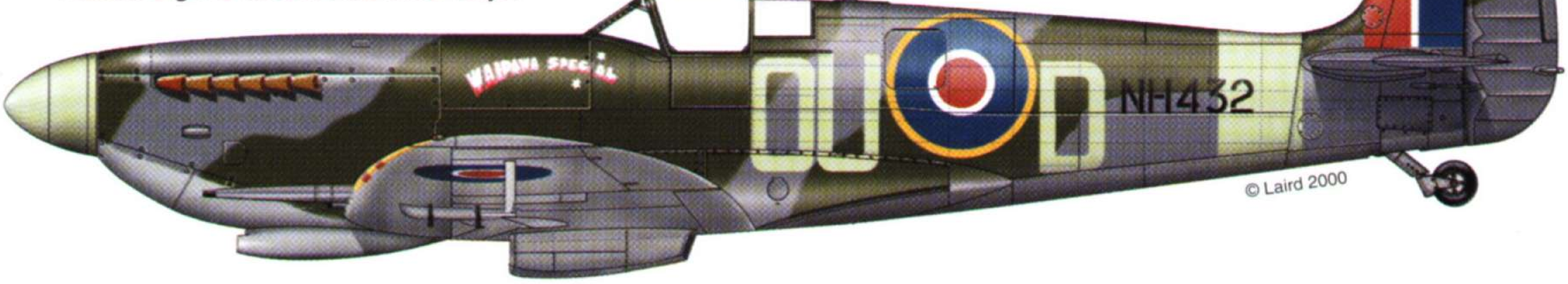
Flight Lieutenant Jack Cleland's personal Spitfire Mk VII named 'Isabel II' shortly after 12 June 1944. On that day he shot down two Fw 190s, flying MB768 'YQ-X'.


© Laird 2000
MD106 YQ W
© Laird 2000

The Spitfire Mk IX flown by Pilot Officer Max Collett of 485 (NZ) Squadron, December 1944. This 'C' wing aircraft had its 20mm cannons moved to the outer bays at unit level and 0.5" machine guns fitted in the inner bays.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Once the Squadron learnt he had been put ashore at Portland, Flying Officer Mike Cooper, who had flown on the operation, flew an Airspeed Oxford from 616 at Culmhead to Warmwell (near Portland) to collect Jack and return him to base. Eventually Cleland arrived outside his home in an RAF Jeep driven by a WAAF and her friend. Jack jumped out and bowled into his kitchen as if nothing had happened.

"Hello - where have you been?" asked Isabel.

"I've been for a swim in the channel" Jack replied, as he threw his wet uniform on the floor.

"Oh yes, but with whom?" enquired Isabel as the pile of sodden clothes unfolded to reveal a bra, slip and panties. Next morning a very embarrassed WAAF phoned and asked for her underwear back. Both WAAF's had stored their clothes loosely in the back of the jeep as they transferred between bases.

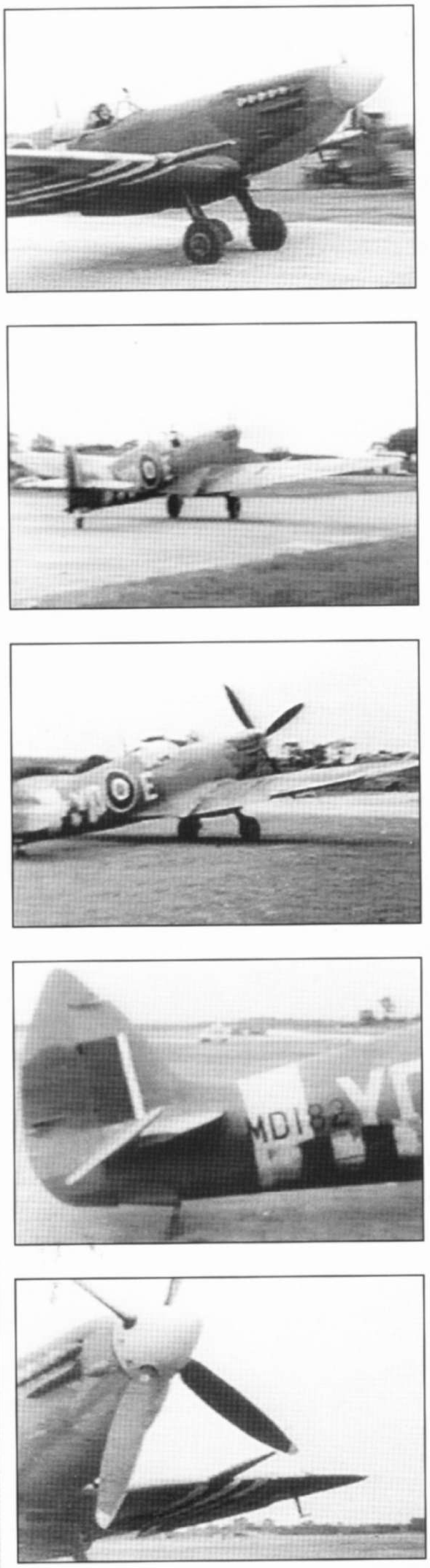
BACK INTO ACTION

After the excitement and close calls of 15 June, it was three days before Flight Lieutenant Cleland flew his next operation. Flying 'YQ-R' he led three other Spitfires searching for targets of opportunity over France. In excellent visibility the tally opened with one staff car south of Sourdeval, one locomotive and thirty railcars at Domfront, then continued with one locomotive, four coaches and a staff car at Ceuce and thirty trucks at Sautilly, before concluding with another thirty trucks at St. Aubin. Due to the length of time they spent on this operation, their fuel level was too low to make it back to England. Therefore Cleland led the flight to a landing strip at Cardonville, France after 2 hours 35 minutes flying. They were only on French soil for 55 minutes while the Americans refueled and serviced their Spitfires, before flying back to Culmhead.

The rest of June saw the same hectic pace being kept up by the Squadron. The majority of the remaining operations flown by Flight Lieutenant Cleland were patrols or bomber escorts of about 1 hour 30 minutes to 1 hour 50 minutes duration. An exception was 27 June when he was airborne in 'YQ-W' (Isabel II) for his longest flight in a Spitfire – 3 hours and 15 minutes. This time he destroyed two locomotives, one military bus, two staff cars and four trucks. His last operation on 3 July 1944, bought to an end his second combat tour with 616 Squadron.

Within days of Jack Cleland leaving, 616 received their first jet aircraft, Gloster Meteor Mk I's. (Earlier, on 27 May 1944, the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Watts and Flying Officer Mike Cooper had flown to Farnborough, where they became the first Squadron pilots to fly the Meteor). The first RAF and Allied operational sortie in a jet propelled aircraft was subsequently carried out on 27 July, when Flying Officer McKenzie, in a Meteor, carried out a 'Diver' patrol (anti VI Flying bomb).

While Mike Cooper had given Jack Cleland some twin-engine flying instruction in 616 Squadron's Airspeed Oxford, in preparation for the arrival of the jets; Cleland missed the opportunity to handle the controls of a Meteor. However, his secondment to the USAAF on 6 July, 1944, meant that he became the only New Zealand fighter pilot to fly with the Eighth Air Force. Within a month he would be flying a P-51D Mustang with the 363rd Fighter Squadron on 'Frantic V', a long range 'Shuttle' mission via Russia.



Five photographs taken from a film clip showing Flight Lieutenant Jack Cleland taxiing Spitfire Mk VII 'YQ-E' MD182 of 616 Squadron after landing at Leiston, 23 September 1944. Note the narrow 'Invasion' stripes and Marshall blower intake under the exhausts. Cleland flew the Spitfire to Leiston to show his ex Squadron mates of the 357th FG. (J Cannon via T Neilsen)

357TH FIGHTER GROUP, USAAF

Flight Lieutenant Cleland had been posted to one of the Eighth Air Force's elite Fighter Groups - the 357th at Leiston, Suffolk. So had Flight Lieutenant Eric Woolley, ex 131 Squadron, and it seems likely they were the only RAF pilots seconded from RAF No.10 Group. Eric went to the 362nd FS and Jack to the 363rd. Cleland, with two successful Spitfire tours, navigation and reconnaissance training, previous RAF Mustang experience and suitable personal qualities, would have been an ideal candidate for such exchange duties.

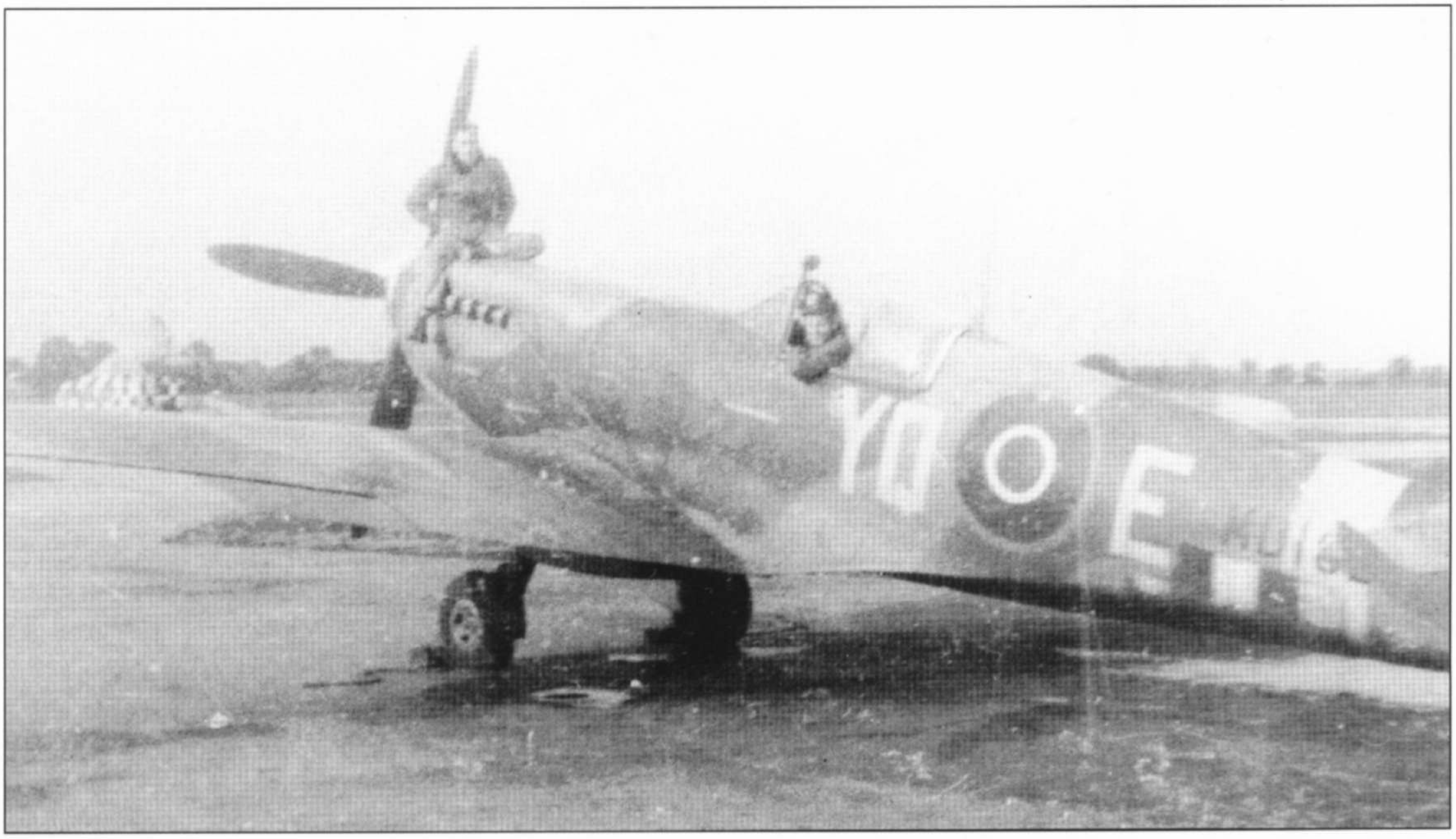
That he fitted in is indicated by a few comments from those who flew with him. Jack Cleland flew as wingman to Bill Overstreet (P-51C, 'B6-0' 42-103309, 'Berlin Express') for the shuttle mission. He wrote "*Jack was a good fighter pilot, was a lot of fun...*" Another, William 'Obee' O'Brien, (P-51D, 'B6-G' 44-13522, 'Billy's Bitch') was to write: "*I was a Flight Leader in the 357th Fighter Group assigned to the 363rd Fighter Squadron. We were referred to by the Germans as 'The Yoxford Boys'. This name came from a very small village near the base... Jack was an experienced combat pilot and he never made reference to his past work with the RAF as a comparison with ours. He was competent, reliable, did not complain or tell us our jobs. I liked and respected Jack.*"

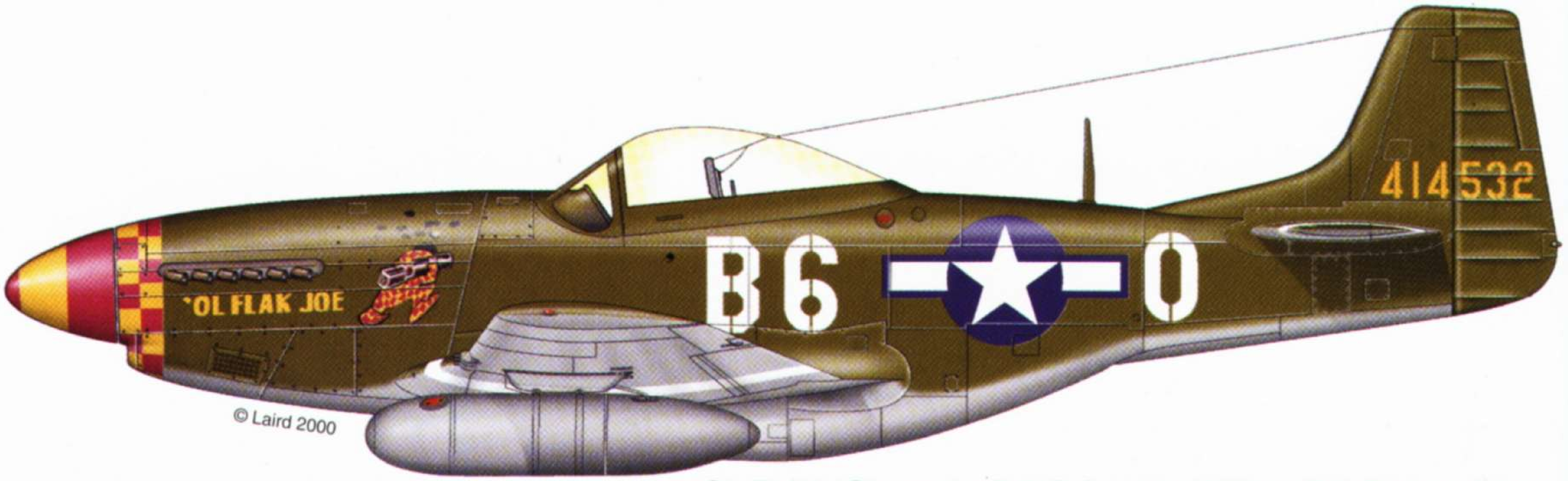
In mid 1944, the USAAF Fighter Groups found themselves seriously short of experienced Flight Leaders, and fighter pilots with good navigational ability were at a premium, so such an exchange would have suited them. The RAF side is less clear. Jack's record of service lists his name with the 357th FG as for the purpose of 'Training in long range operations'. At this stage of the war RAF High Command were apparently considering setting up Mustang equipped bomber-escort fighter squadrons, so it was logical to learn first hand from the Americans. Another possibility was an RAF concern to get direct information on the reliability of American combat claims as to destroyed and damaged German aircraft, in the air and on the ground.

Spitfire Mk VII 'YQ-E' MB182, visiting the 357th FG base, Leiston, on 23 September 1944. William Fricker is sitting on the cowling and Norbert Fisher is in the cockpit. Note in the background, a runway control vehicle painted with black and white checkerboard.

Jack Cleland flew Spitfire Mk VIs and Mk VIIs plus P-51 Mustangs on three combat tours. However, on his 84 Spitfire Mk VI sorties Jack saw enemy aircraft only four times, but could not engage them. On 57 Spitfire Mk VII sorties he saw enemy aircraft within striking distance on just one occasion and destroyed them both.

With his experience Jack Cleland was well qualified to have become an 'Ace' with the 357th. Unfortunately, his two months with them were the quietest for the year, with only 21 victories being recorded by the Group. In the following similar period (with Cleland away), they destroyed 96 enemy aircraft. (M Olmstead via T Neilsen)




'OL FLAK JOE
B6
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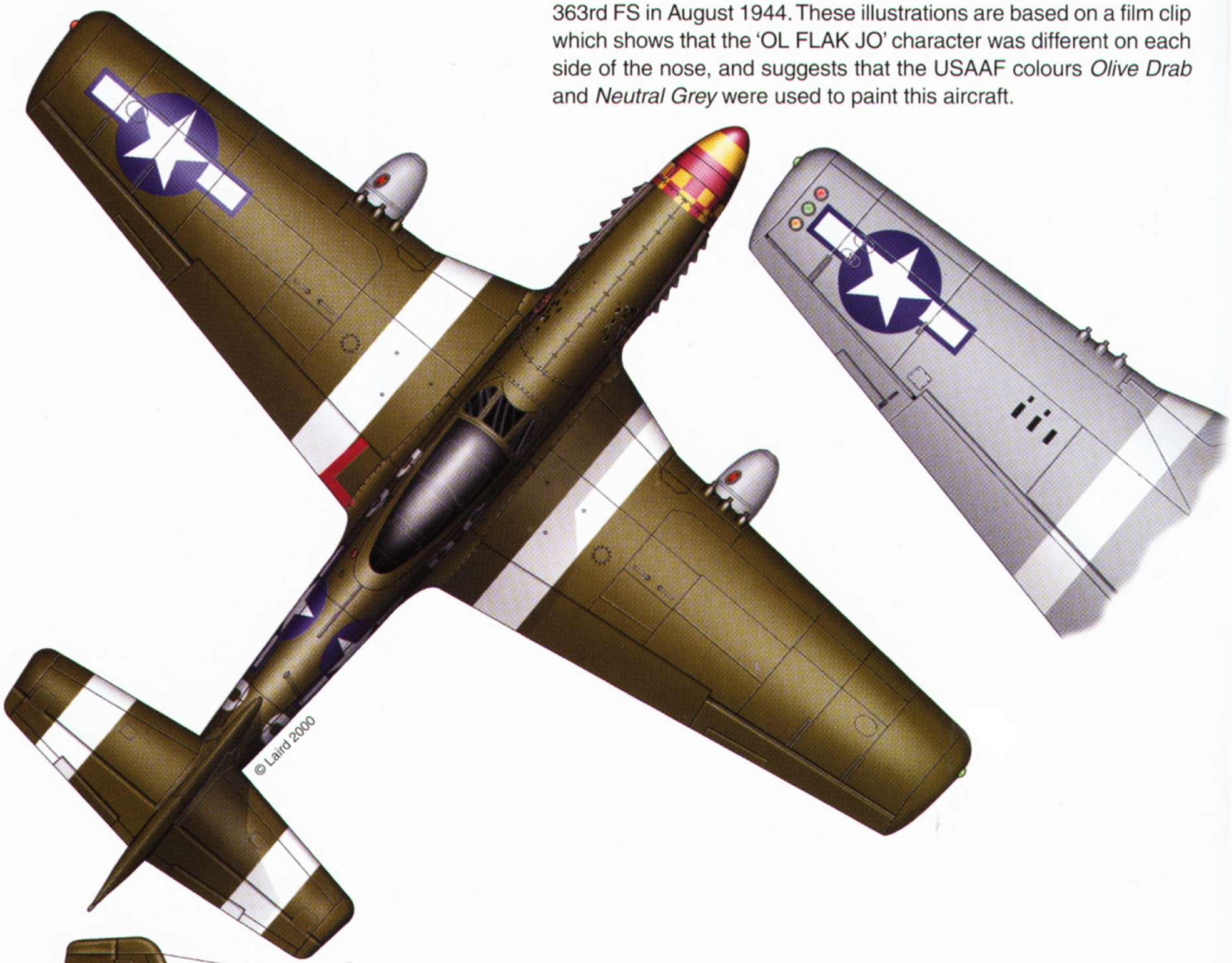
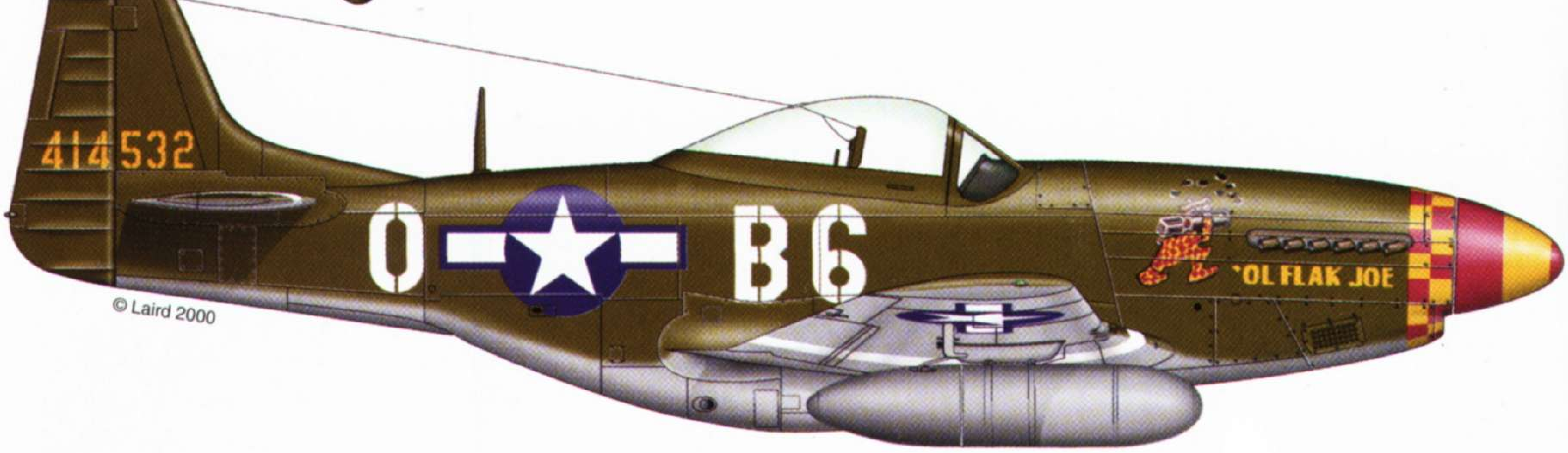
© Laird 2000

'OL FLAK JO' was the P-51D flown by William (Bill) Fricker of the 363rd FS in August 1944. These illustrations are based on a film clip which shows that the 'OL FLAK JO' character was different on each side of the nose, and suggests that the USAAF colours *Olive Drab* and *Neutral Grey* were used to paint this aircraft.

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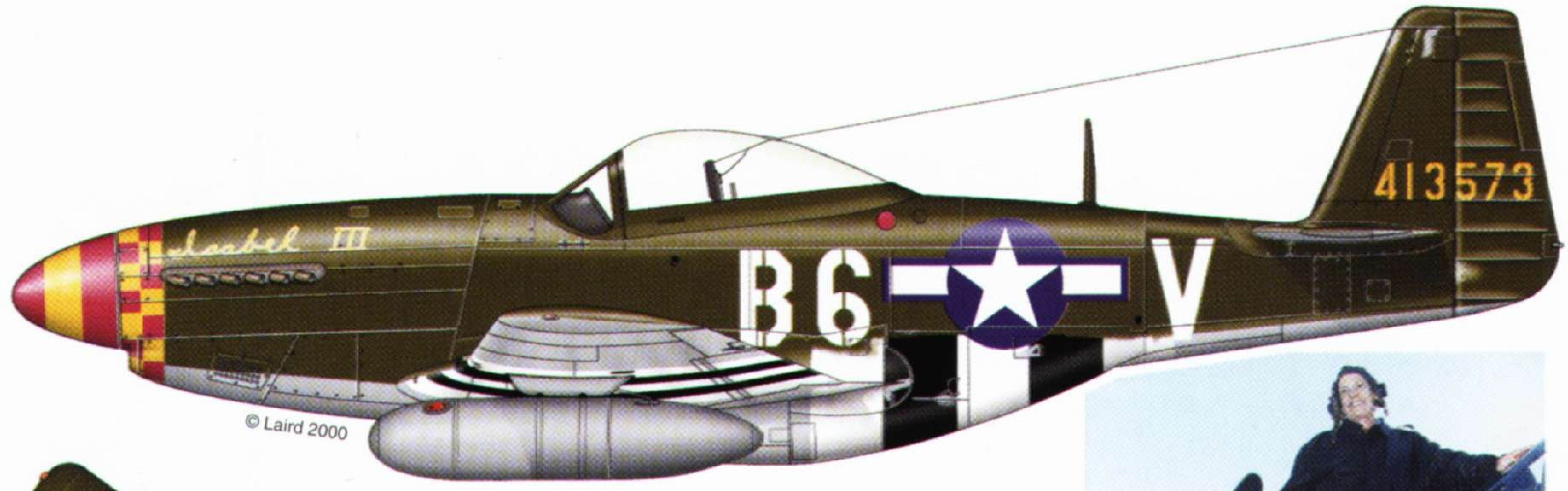
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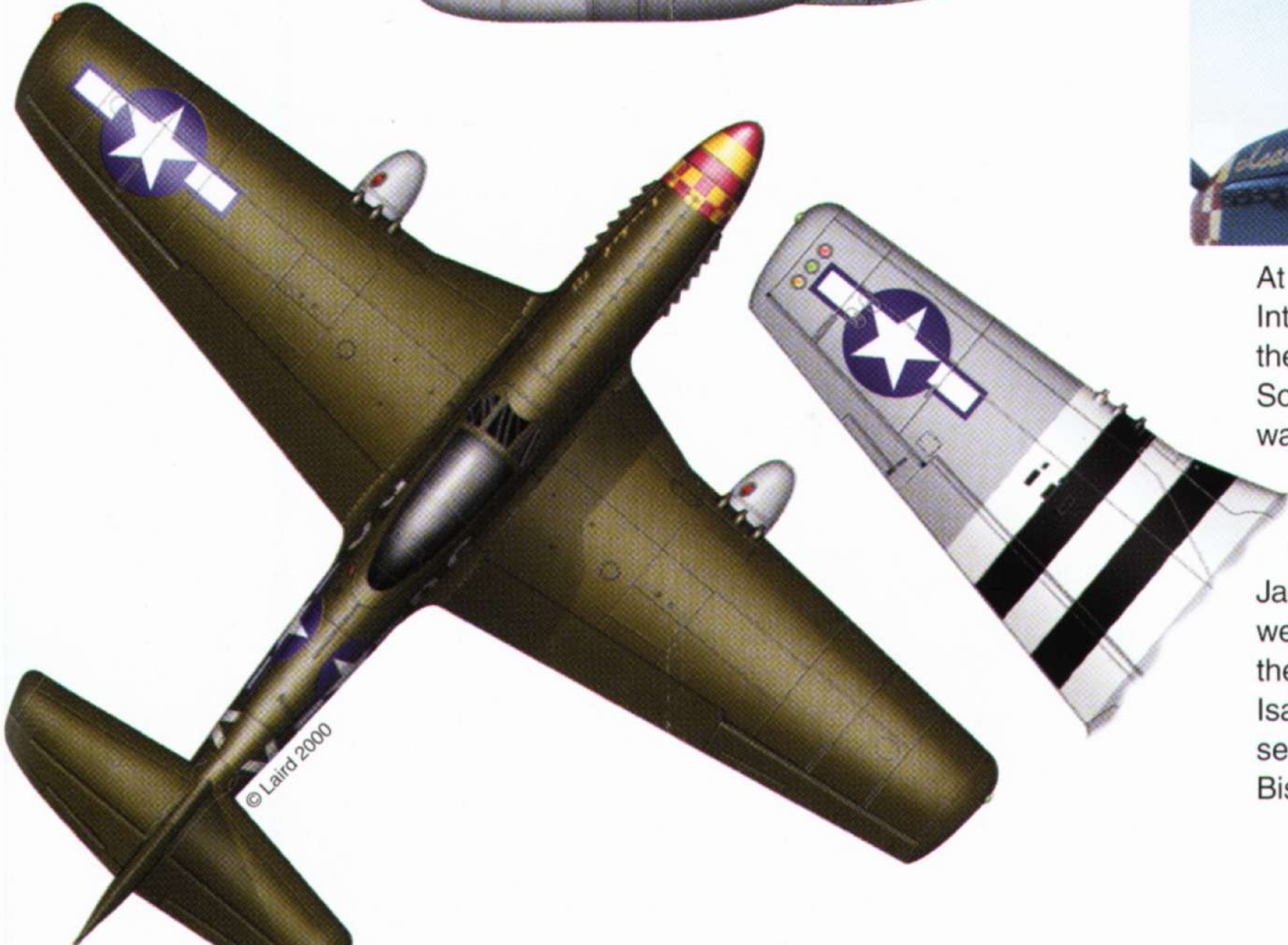
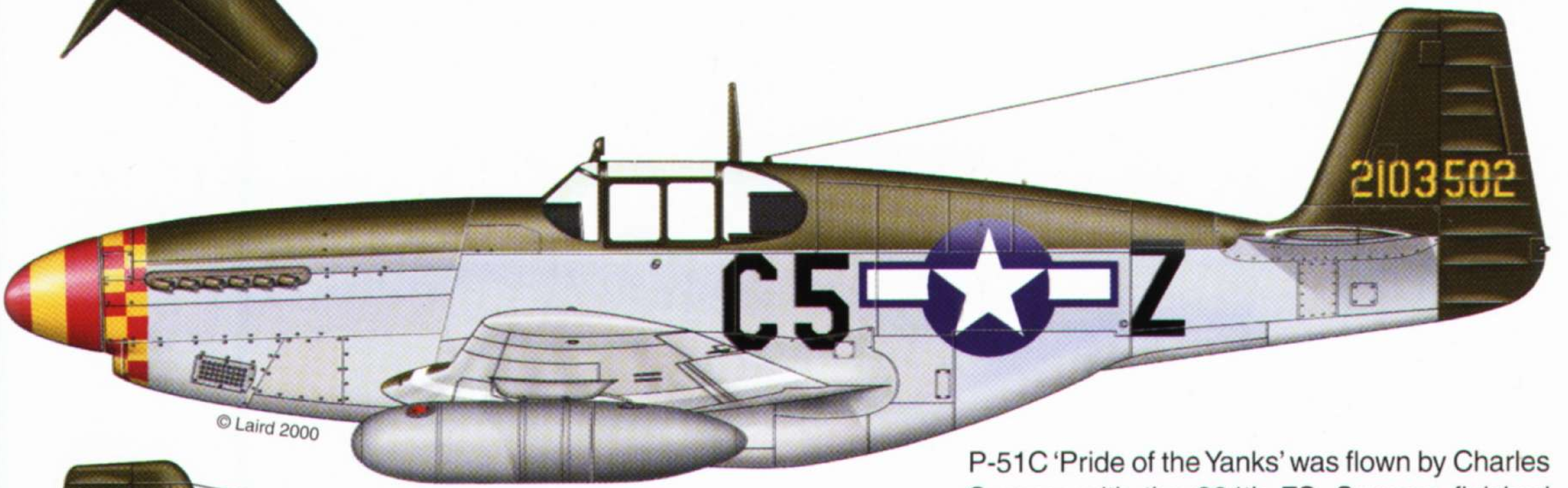


At the 'Warbirds over Wanaka' International Airshow of 1998 – the largest Warbird show in the Southern Hemisphere – a P-51 was flown painted as 'Isabel III'. Isabel Cleland, her family and Brigadier General Charles 'Chuck' Yeager (who flew with Jack on many of his missions) were all guests at the event. As the airshow concluded, the real Isabel was strapped into the two-seat Mustang behind pilot Grant Bisset and flew in 'Isabel III'.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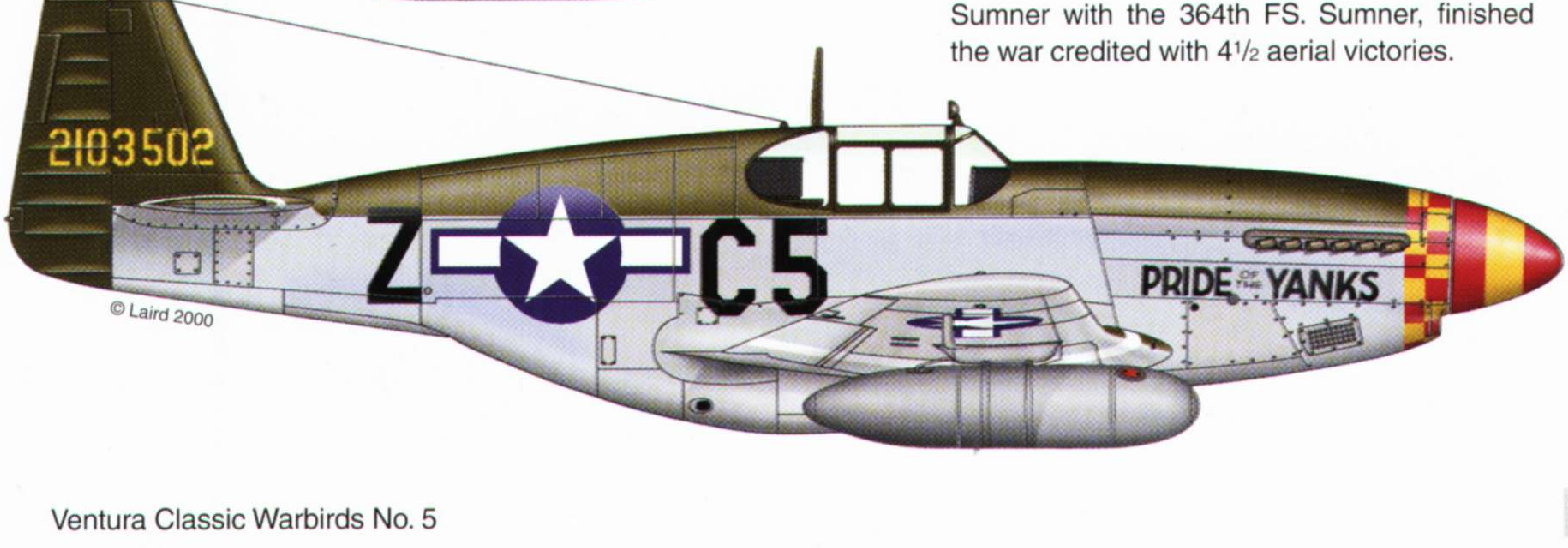
P-51C 'Pride of the Yanks' was flown by Charles Sumner with the 364th FS. Sumner, finished the war credited with $4^1/_2$ aerial victories.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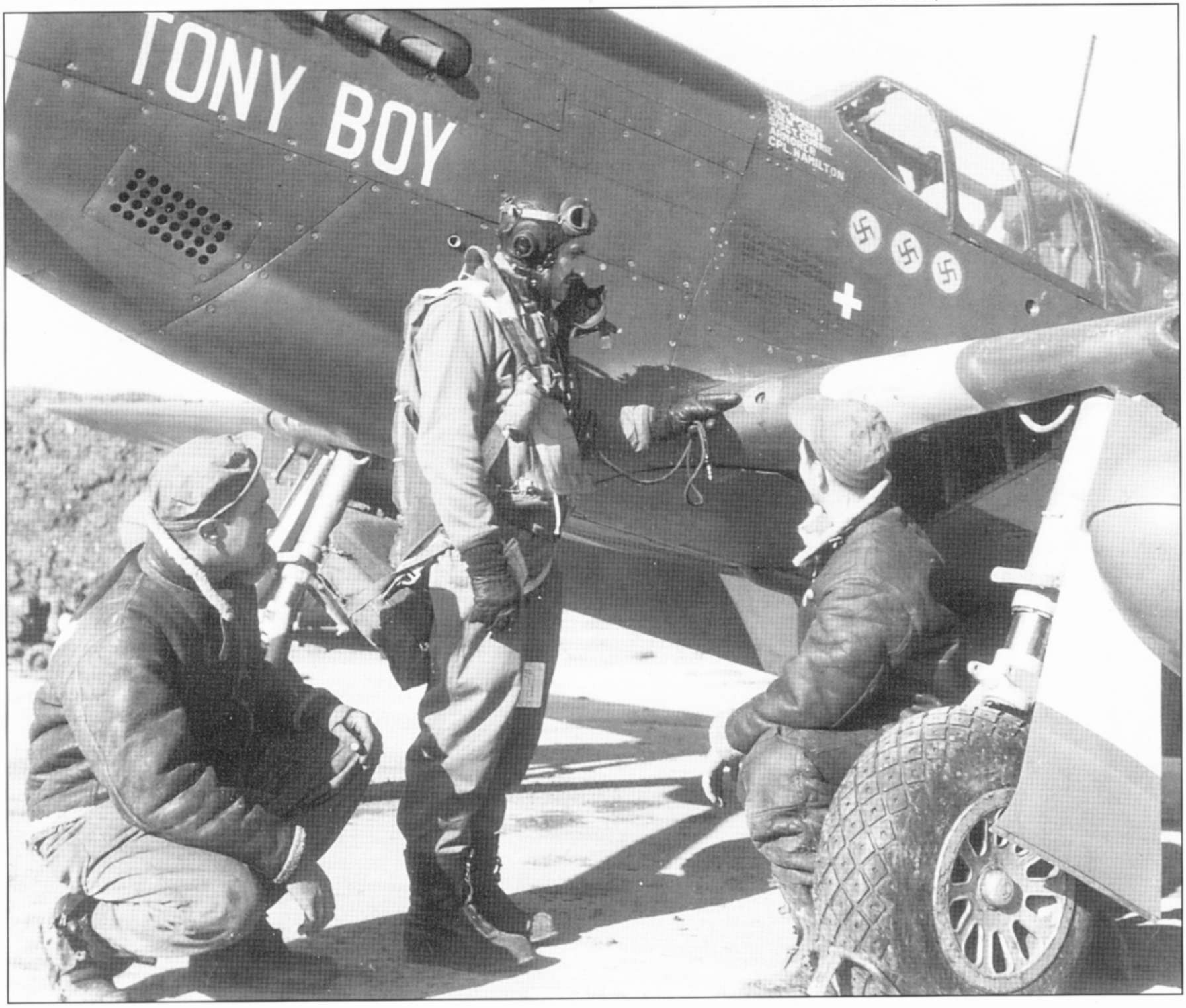
PRIDE OF THE YANKS
© Laird 2000

Following two hours 30 minutes of local flying in a P-51B coded 'B6-S' on 15 July 1944; Flight Lieutenant Cleland's next flight was on the 20th of July. It was his first combat mission with the 357th FG.

Jack took his place on the runway in a P-51B coded 'B6-U', loaded with enough fuel to escort B-17 Flying Fortresses to Eisenach and back. He was to the right and slightly behind his element leader as the Group did a stream take off, two at a time. This was how the 54 Mustangs, led by Lieutenant Colonel Hayes, could get into the air in quick succession. Flight Lieutenant Cleland brought the P-51B up to power, released the brakes and started the takeoff run. As the Mustang gathered speed it suddenly veered to the left, the spinning propeller blades just missing the element leader's rudder. Jack cut the power and managed to bring the careering aircraft under control. He taxied back to the starting position. Once he received the green light, Jack recommenced his takeoff run, but the result was the same!

While this was happening the rest of the Group had formed up into their assigned flights and were circling Leiston, waiting for Jack to join them. William O'Brien was leading the 363rd on this mission, but couldn't break radio silence to find out what had happened, or who was having all the trouble. On Jack's third attempt he successfully lifted the Mustang off the runway and joined his assigned flight. After 11 aborts, 43 Mustangs rendezvoused with the bombers south west of

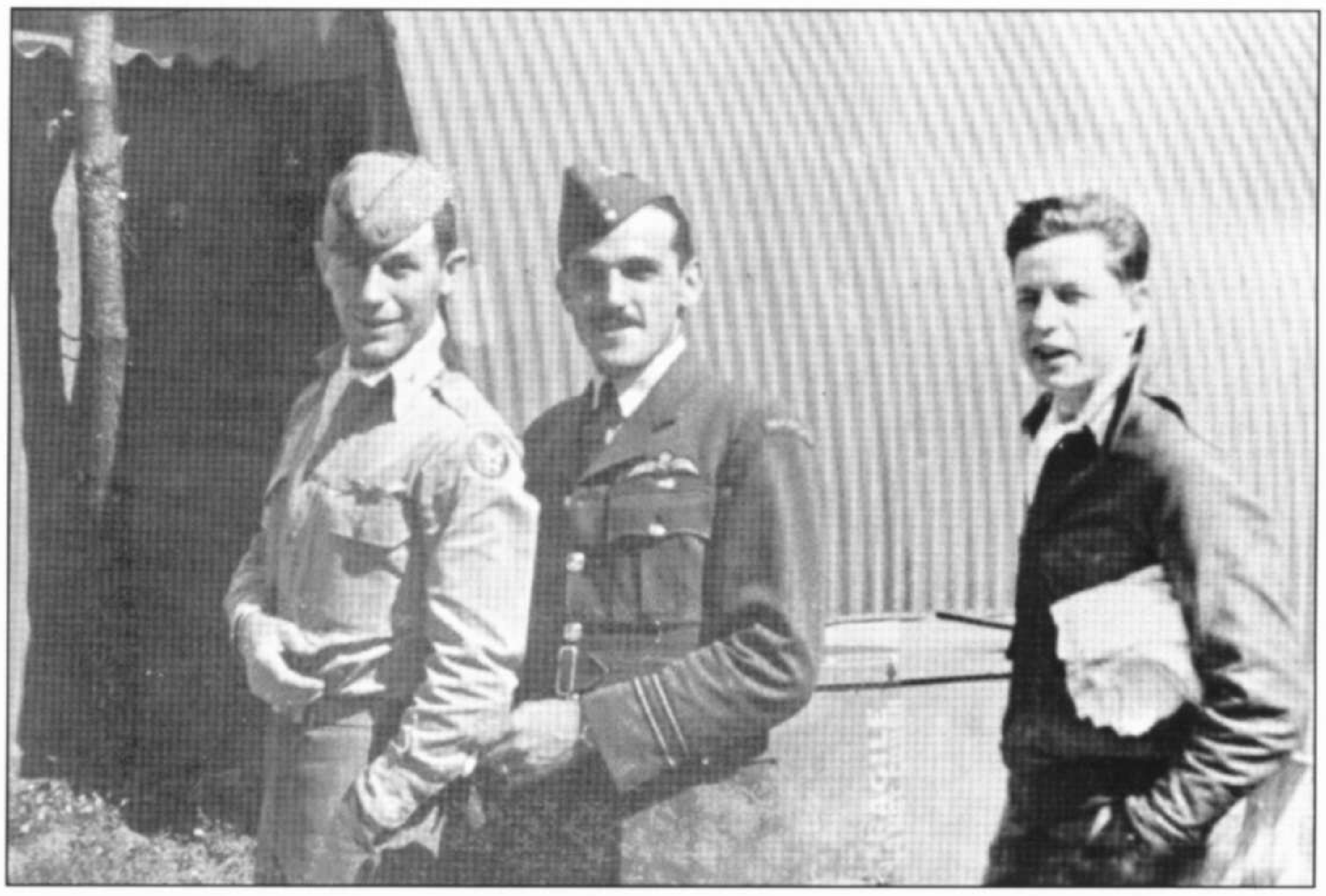
Henry Spicer, pilot of 'Tony Boy' is pointing to the camera port of his Mustang, while his ground crew, Robert Currie (left) and Robert Hamilton look on. Note the small white cross denoting that this Mustang is fitted with an extra fuselage fuel tank. Spicer scored three aerial victories before being shot down and taken prisoner on 5 March 1945. (J De Shay via T Neilsen)



Koblenz at 25,000 feet. No enemy aircraft were seen and the B-17s were escorted without incident to the target. Four hours and 35 minutes later Jack was back on the ground - a considerable change from a typical one hour 30 minute Spitfire operation.

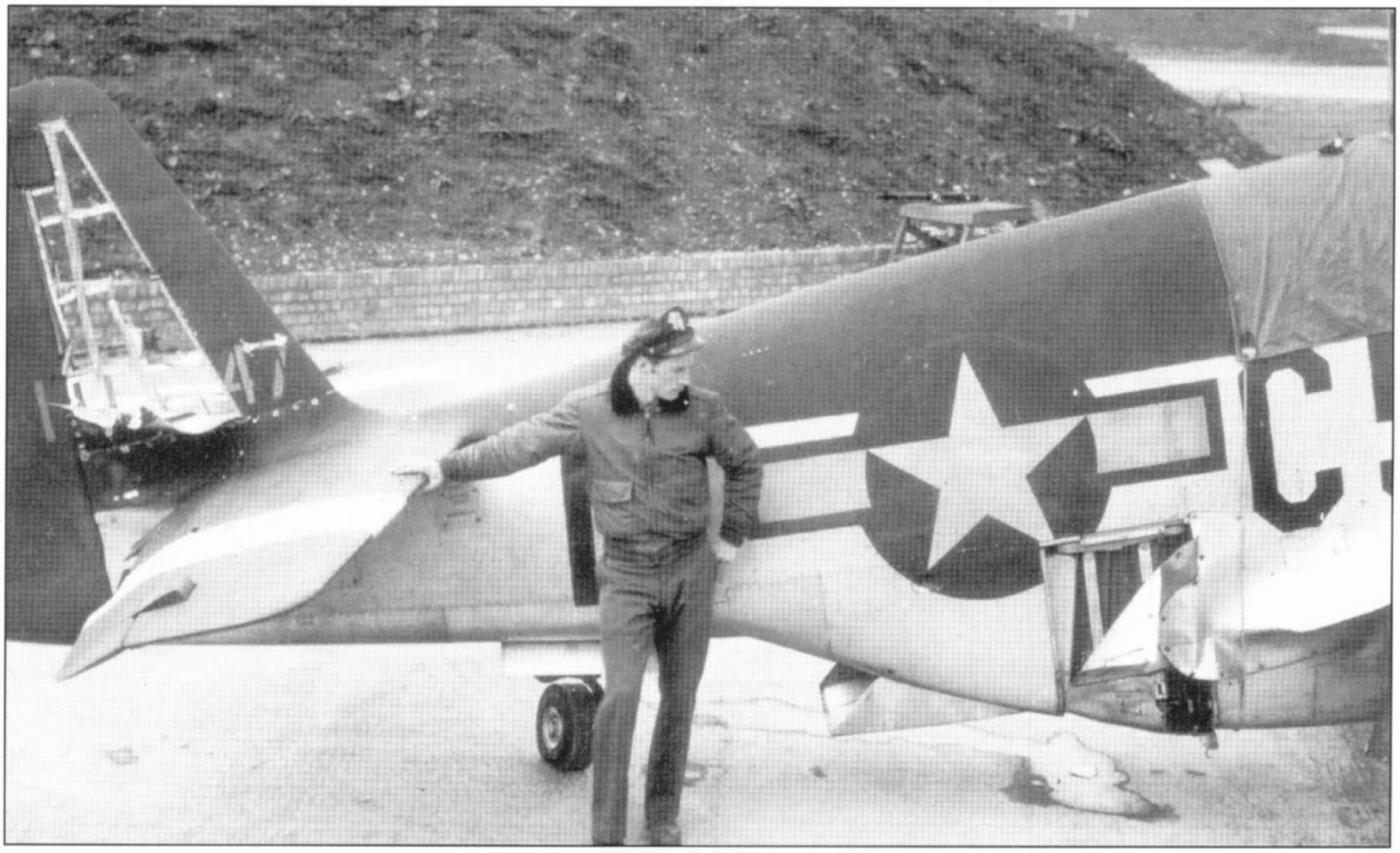
"Who had all the trouble getting off the ground ?" asked O'Brien when everyone was back in the debriefing room. Jack sheepishly replied " 'Obee', I had a little trouble!" In fact, Jack had a lot of trouble as it was his first flight in a fully fuelled and combat ladened Mustang. Jack took some ribbing from this incident, but also earned respect, because he hadn't given up.

The next day Jack was back in the cockpit. He escorted B-17s to München/Hamburg in a P-51C and this time the takeoff was normal. He flew next on 1 August – another uneventful escort mission, with no enemy aircraft putting in an appearance. On the way home Jack headed for the deck in search of ground targets. His log book noted he destroyed three locomotives, two military trucks and three staff cars in the Orleans area. Keehn Landis who flew P-51D, 'B6-H', 44-14356 'Lonesome Polecat' and often flew as Jack Cleland's wingman wrote, "*I was a relatively new pilot in the*

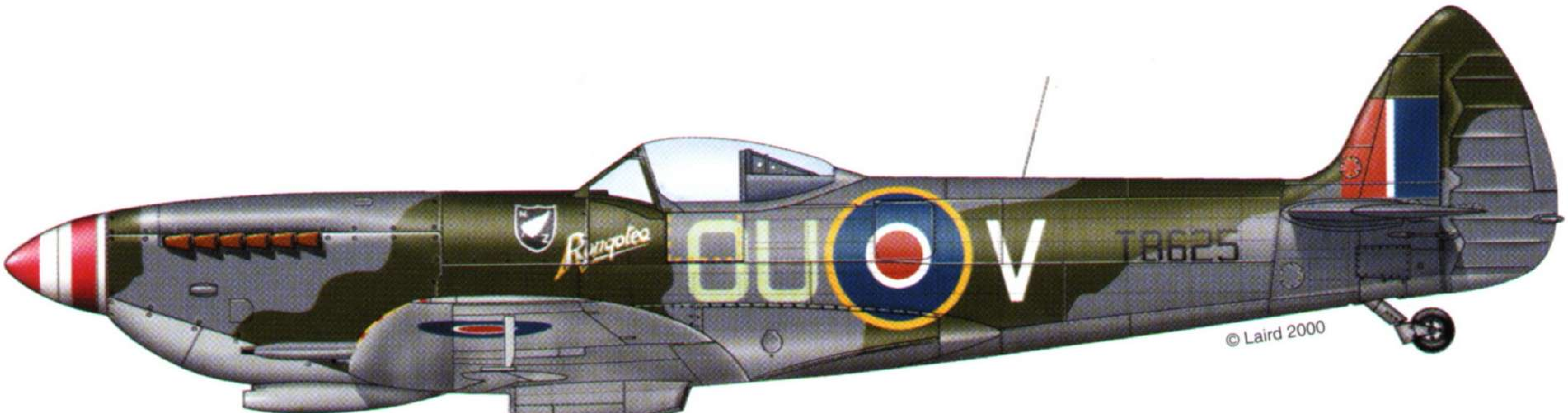


From the left, Charles 'Chuck' Yeager, Jack Cleland and R E Smith outside a Nissen hut at Leiston in 1944. The author has two prints of this photograph and the better one has R E Smith cropped off; hence this is a composite image to make best use of the two photographs. (R Gangwish via T Neilsen and M Olmsted via A Cleland)

General Yeager was the guest of honour at the 1998 'Warbirds over Wanaka' airshow, when a P-51D painted in Jack Cleland's markings performed.



On an Operation Chattanooga sortie, (the targeting of German road and rail transport prior to D-Day); John Howell of the 364th FS was fit by flak, while strafing a train over Northern Germany, 21 May 1944. Despite the damage to his tail and fuselage, Howell still managed to get his Mustang, ('C5-L' 42-106447, named 'Shoo Shoo Baby') back to England. (J De Shay via T Neilsen)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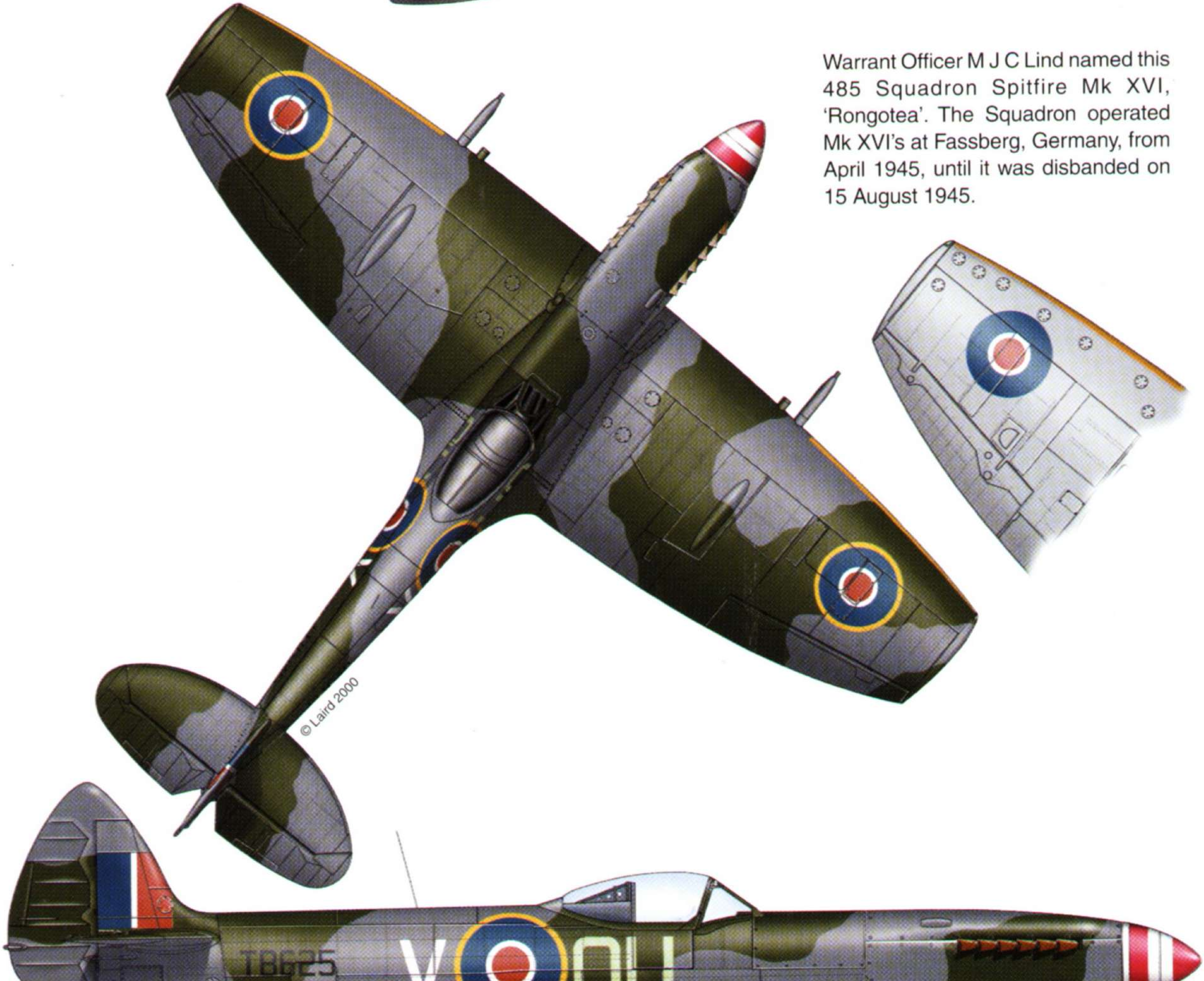
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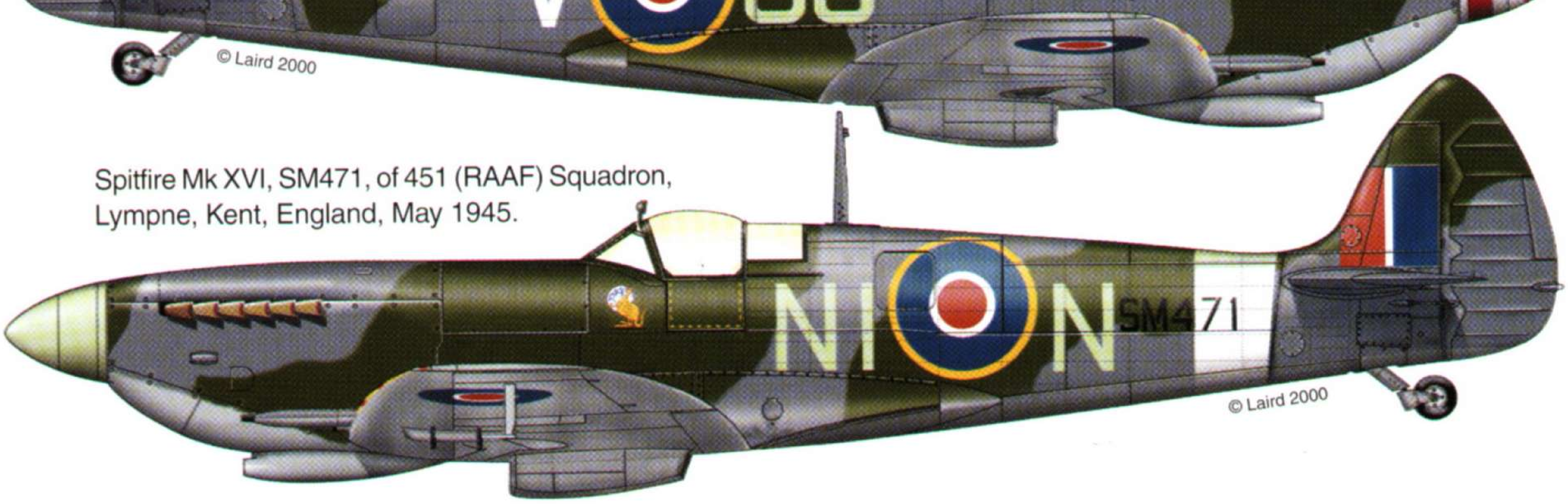
Warrant Officer M J C Lind named this 485 Squadron Spitfire Mk XVI, 'Rongotea'. The Squadron operated Mk XVI's at Fassberg, Germany, from April 1945, until it was disbanded on 15 August 1945.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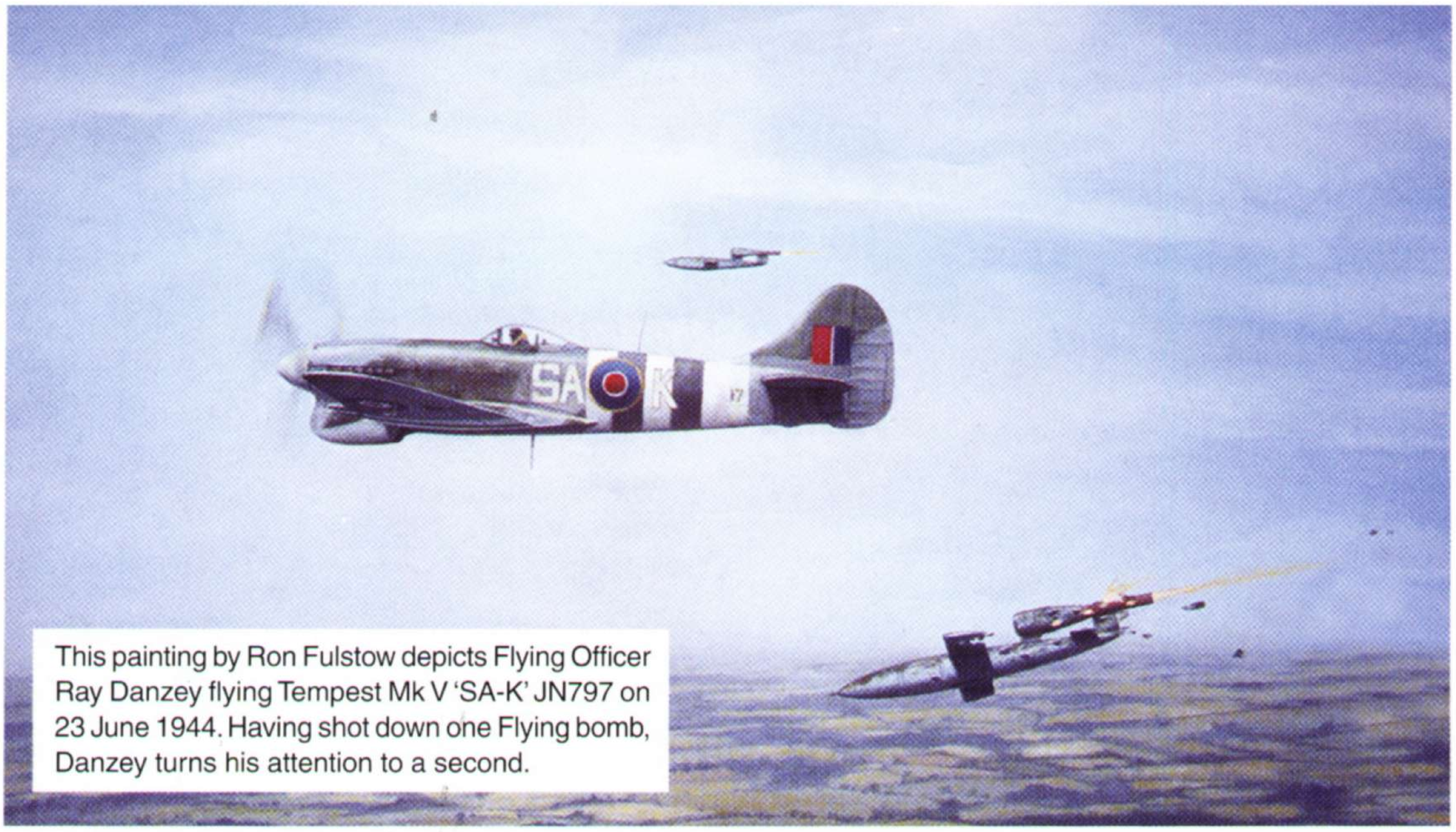
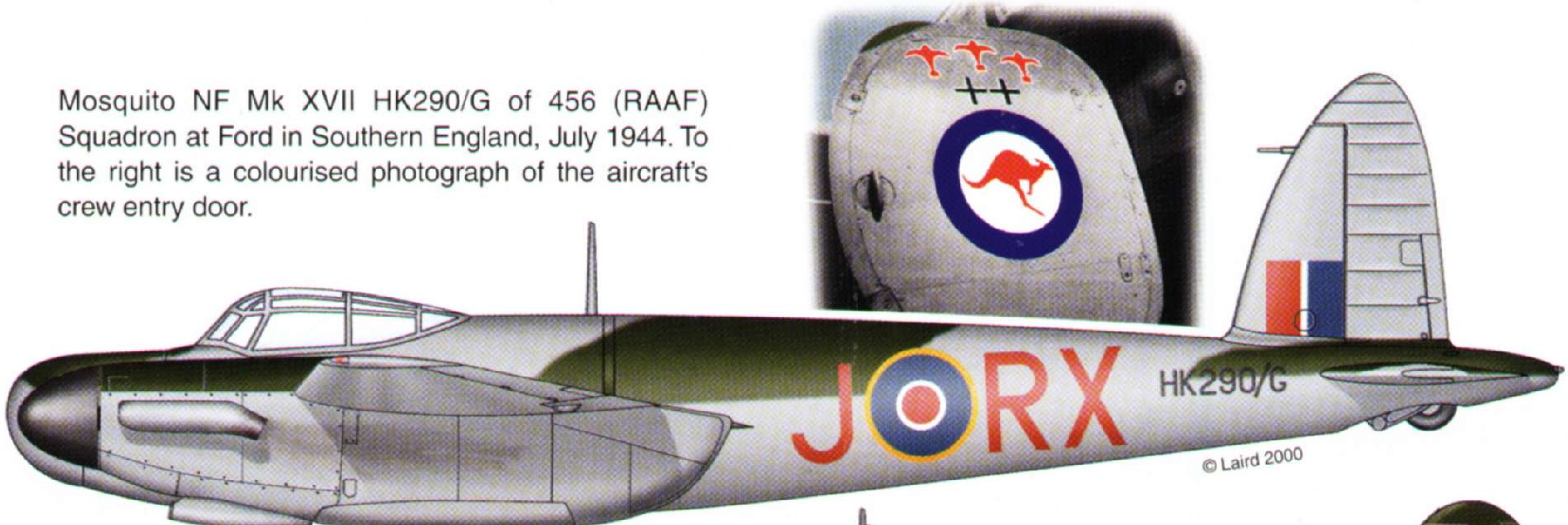
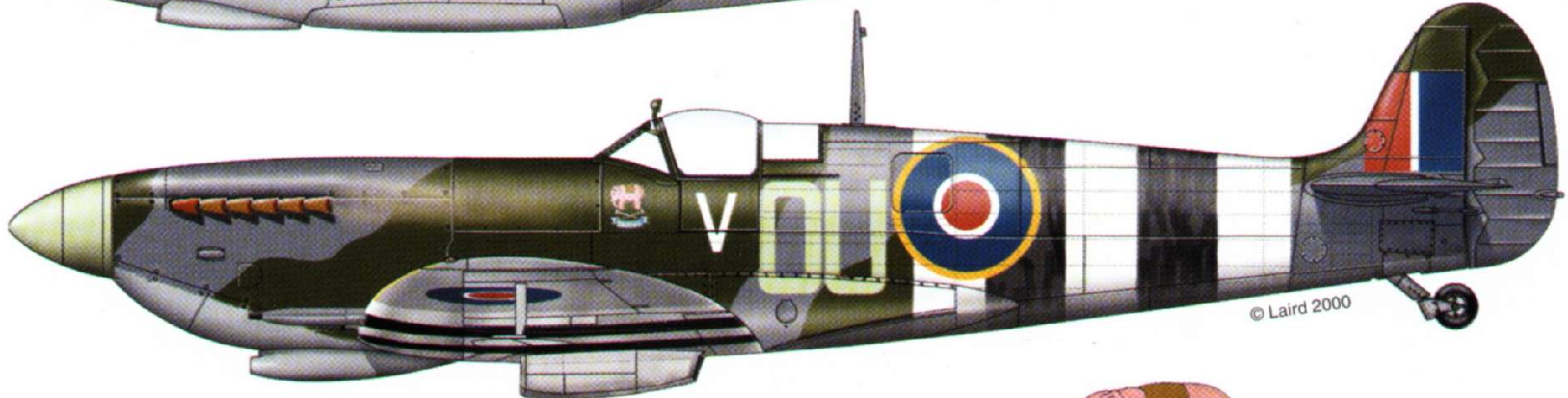
Spitfire Mk XVI, SM471, of 451 (RAAF) Squadron, Lympne, Kent, England, May 1945.



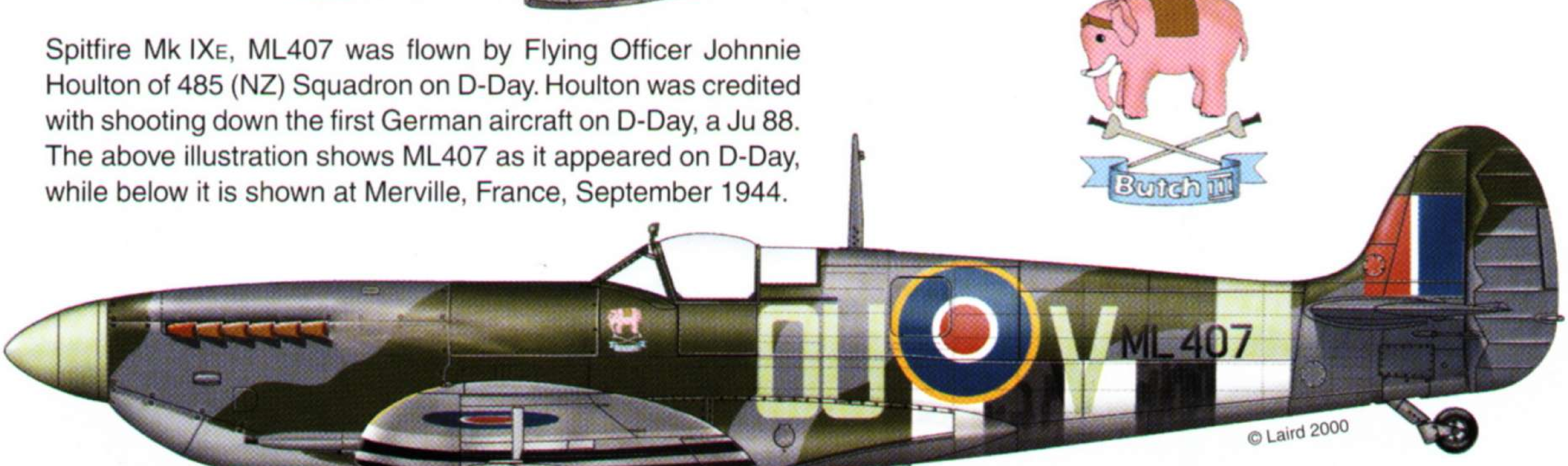
This painting by Ron Fulstow depicts Flying Officer Ray Danzey flying Tempest Mk V 'SA-K' JN797 on 23 June 1944. Having shot down one Flying bomb, Danzey turns his attention to a second.

Mosquito NF Mk XVII HK290/G of 456 (RAAF) Squadron at Ford in Southern England, July 1944. To the right is a colourised photograph of the aircraft's crew entry door.





Spitfire Mk IXE, ML407 was flown by Flying Officer Johnnie Houlton of 485 (NZ) Squadron on D-Day. Houlton was credited with shooting down the first German aircraft on D-Day, a Ju 88. The above illustration shows ML407 as it appeared on D-Day, while below it is shown at Merville, France, September 1944.



363rd Fighter Squadron when I was asked to be Jack's wingman. I was quite flattered in light of his long experience. Jack was never content with tiresome, routine missions. He was always ready to break away, search out ground targets and lead an independent warriors life. It was a struggle to keep up with him. He liked to fly as fast as the Mustang would go. Unfortunately Jack and I had little contact on the ground. I used to tease him by calling him 'The Limey' as we knew how ANZACs feel about being referred to as a Limey!"

On 5 August Cleland had his first flight in a P-51D Mustang when he test flew 44-13573 coded 'B6-B'. It featured a bubble canopy and cut-down rear fuselage; but being an early production P-51D-5 model, it lacked the dorsal fin fillet and so lacked a degree of directional stability – tiring on a long flight. Jack flew this Mustang direct to Russia the next day and, after the shuttle mission, personalised it as 'Isabel III'.

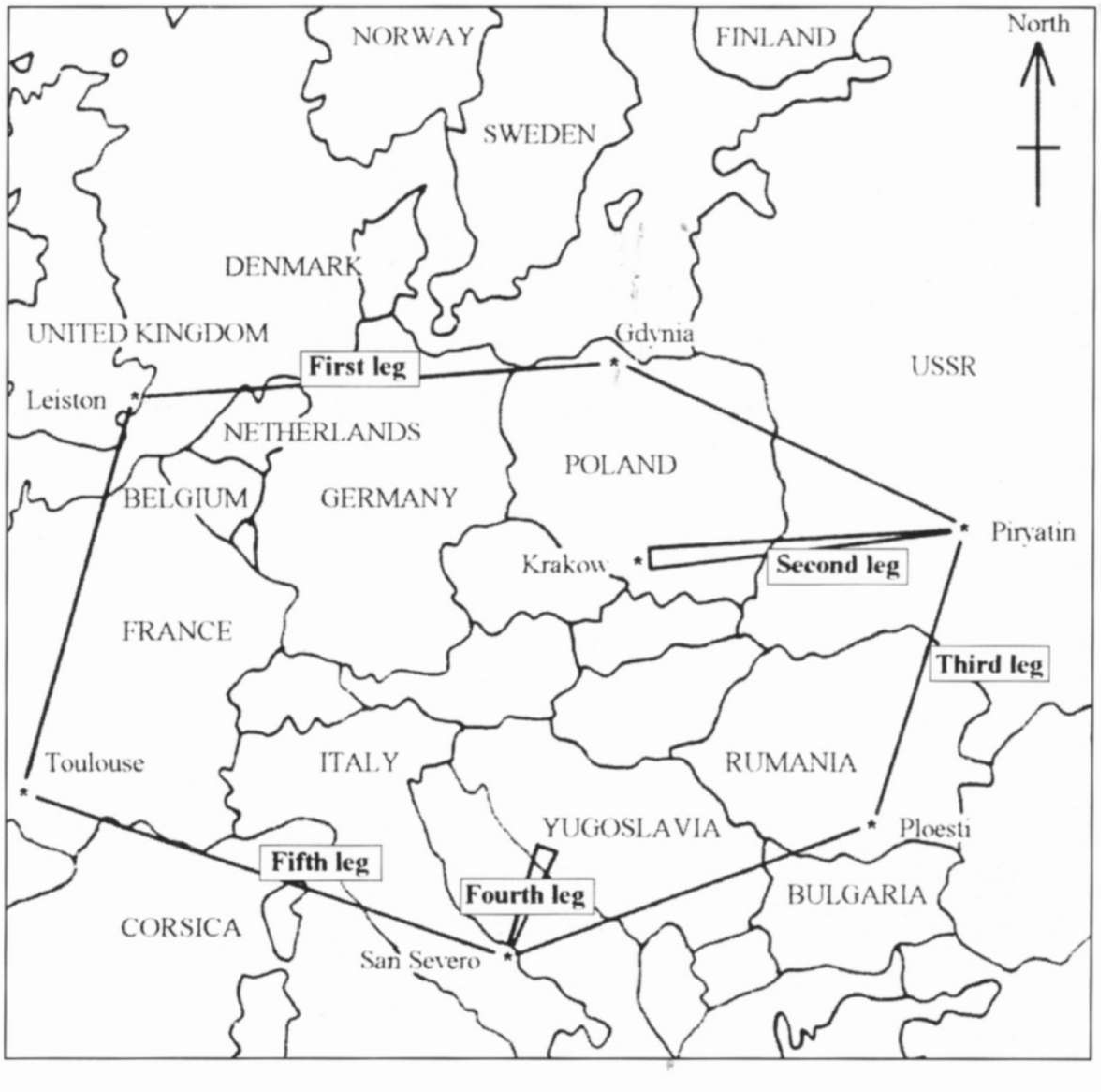
"DADDY RABBIT"

Jack Cleland's friend and comrade Charles 'Daddy Rabbit' Peters in the cockpit of his P-51B Mustang of the same name. Note the blown Malcolm hood. This machine's code and serial were 'B6-J' and 43-6594. During the war the Eighth Air Force allowed enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground to be claimed as victories, because they recognised the dangers involved in strafing Luftwaffe airfields. However postwar this edict was reversed to fall into line with other Air Forces. Five of the crosses marked on 'Daddy Rabbit' when this photo was taken on 24 August 1944, pertain to strafing victims, and another to a shared aerial victory. (A Cleland)

FRANTIC V

Frantic V was one of a series of long range escort missions to Russia; this one involving Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Italy and France from 6-12 August, 1944. B-17s would bomb a target and then continue east to land in Russia. They would then operate from a Russian base, before returning via another target to England. Only the tremendous endurance of the Mustang, equipped with long range drop tanks, made escorting these missions possible. It was certainly a highlight for Flight Lieutenant Cleland, but his part in the historic event nearly did not eventuate.

At 0930 hours on 6 August, Colonel Donald W. Graham led the largest number of aircraft ever launched by the 357th. Seventy two Mustangs took to the air, seven being spares and Jack's was one of these. As things turned out Second Lieutenant Norbert Fisher found his oxygen regulator wasn't



The flight route for the Frantic V shuttle mission. Reproduced from *'Jacks Adventures'* by Tim Neilsen.

operating, so Jack took his place in Green Flight. The pilots of the Flight were: *Green 1*: 1st Lt. William Overstreet, P-51B 'B6-O' 43-24823, 'Berlin Express' (Originally this aircraft was Clarence 'Bud' Anderson's, 'B6-S', 'Old Crow'). *Green 2*: Flt. Lt. Jack Cleland, P-51D, 'B6-B̲', 44-13573. *Green 3*: 1st Lt. Charles Pearson, P-51B, 'B6-H' 43-6755, 'Kalamazoo Kid'. *Green 4*: 1st Lt. William Pernell, P-51B, 'B6-P' 43-24766.

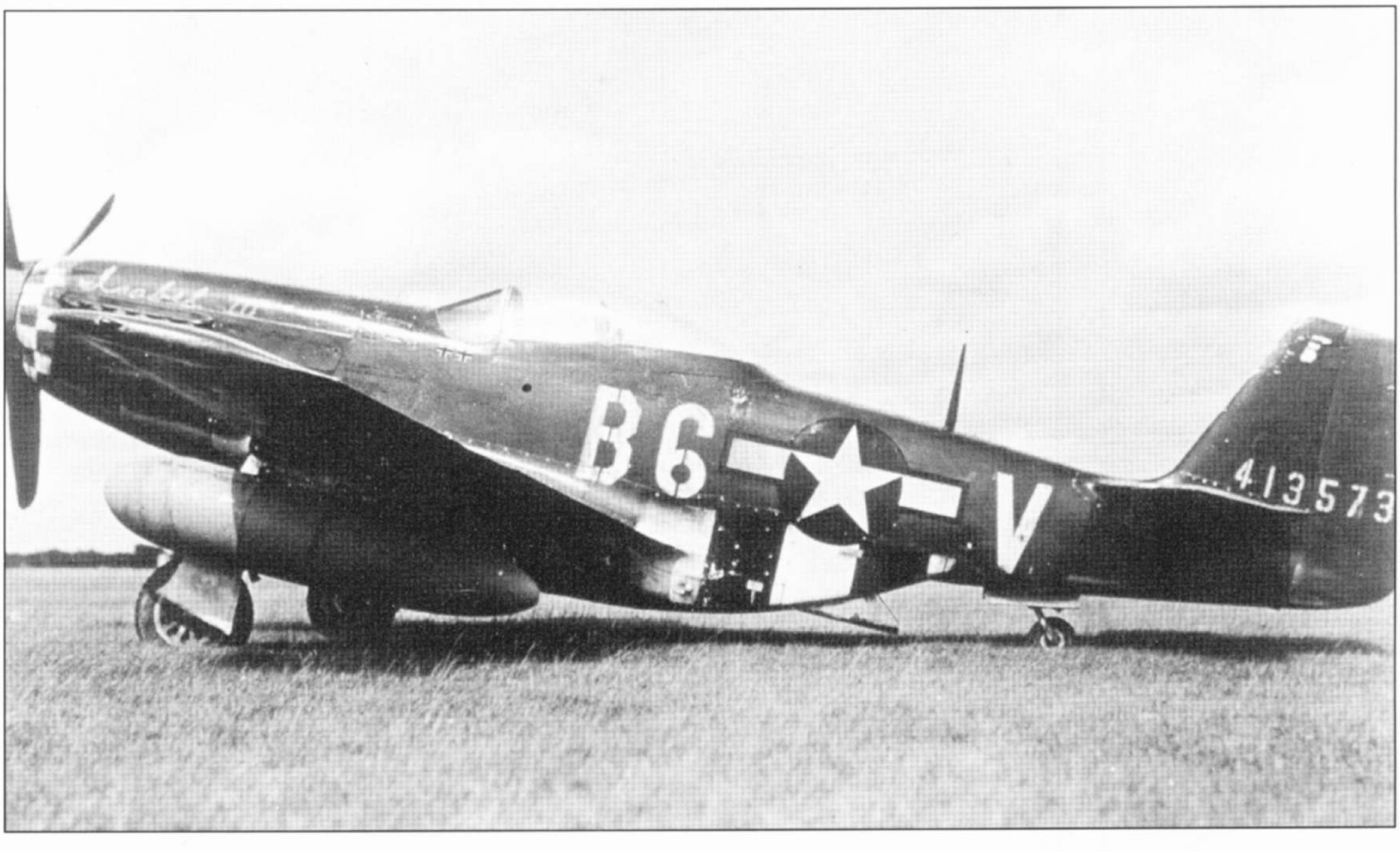
Once the overall formation was sorted out, eight aircraft returned to Leiston. Those continuing with the mission met their charges, 75 B-17s from the 95th and 339th Bomber Groups, and other escort fighters of the 55th and 339th Fighter Groups, 3 hours and 25 minutes after take-off. The target was the Fw 190 factory at Gdynia, Poland. With perfect weather and minimal flak, the bombers achieved excellent results. By now the other Fighter Groups had turned back, leaving the 357th to escort the B-17s onto Piryatin, a village 100 miles east of Kiev. Jack Cleland's log book shows he was airborne for 6 hours 45 minutes on this first leg of Frantic V.

The next day was an equally long escort mission as Colonel Graham led 35 Mustangs to Krakow, Poland. Though Jack and the 363rd FS weren't involved in the dogfights which occurred over the target, Flight Lieutenant Eric Woolley, another RAF exchange pilot (ex 131 Squadron), no doubt was. He was wingman to Captain John Pugh who, flying P-51B 'G4-N' 42-106473, 'Geronimo', destroyed a Bf 109. The formation overnighted back at Piryatin.

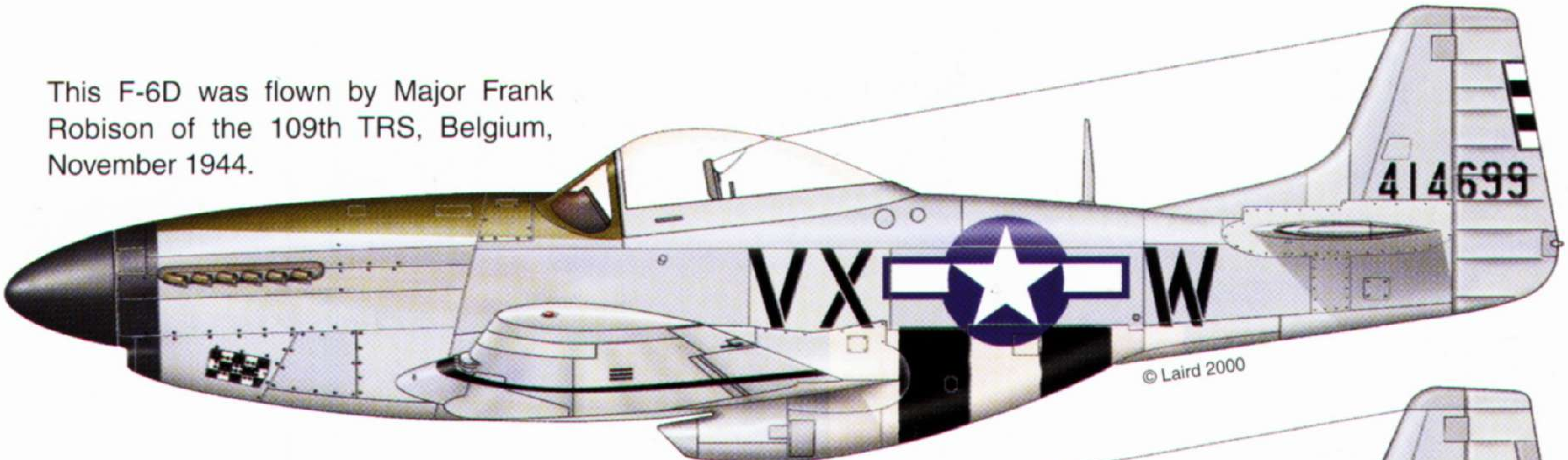
SHILLELAGH

Pilot John Storch of the 364th FS, with his P-51D 'C5-R' 44-13546 'The Shillelagh'. This Mustangs Crew Chief, Ardell Fiedler, is on the left and assistant crew chief Joseph Kubareh on the right. Storch finished the war as an 'Ace' with 10.5 aerial victories. (J De Shay via T Neilsen)

P-51D-5 Mustang 'B6-V', 44-13573. This aircraft was flown by Jack Cleland on the Frantic V shuttle mission via Russia. It was coded 'B6-B̲' at the time. The reason for the underscore was to distinguish it from another P-51 in the squadron also coded 'B'. (T Neilsen)



This F-6D was flown by Major Frank Robison of the 109th TRS, Belgium, November 1944.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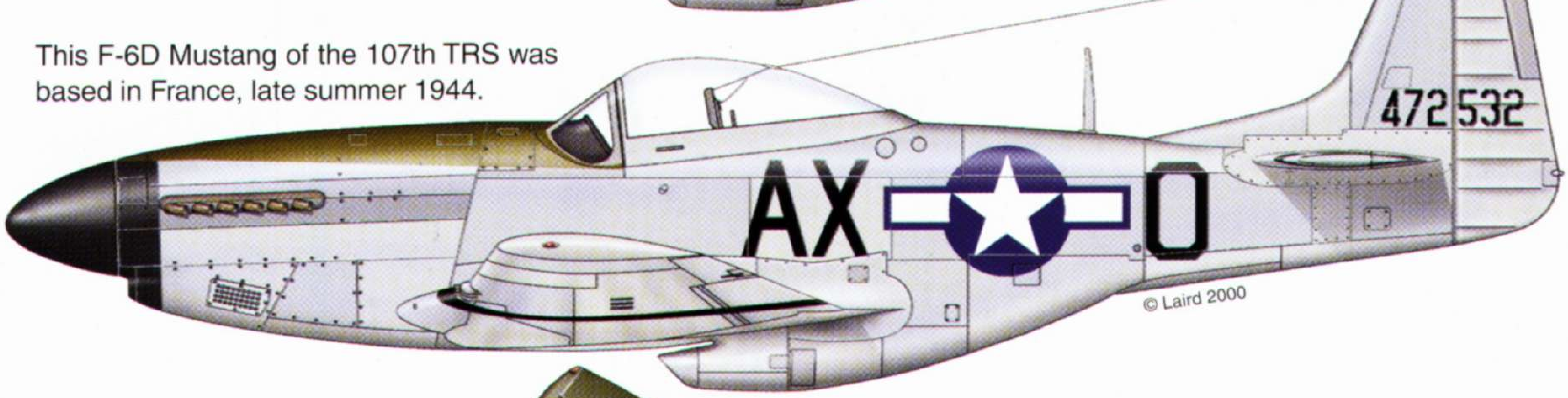
This F-6D Mustang of the 107th TRS was based in France, late summer 1944.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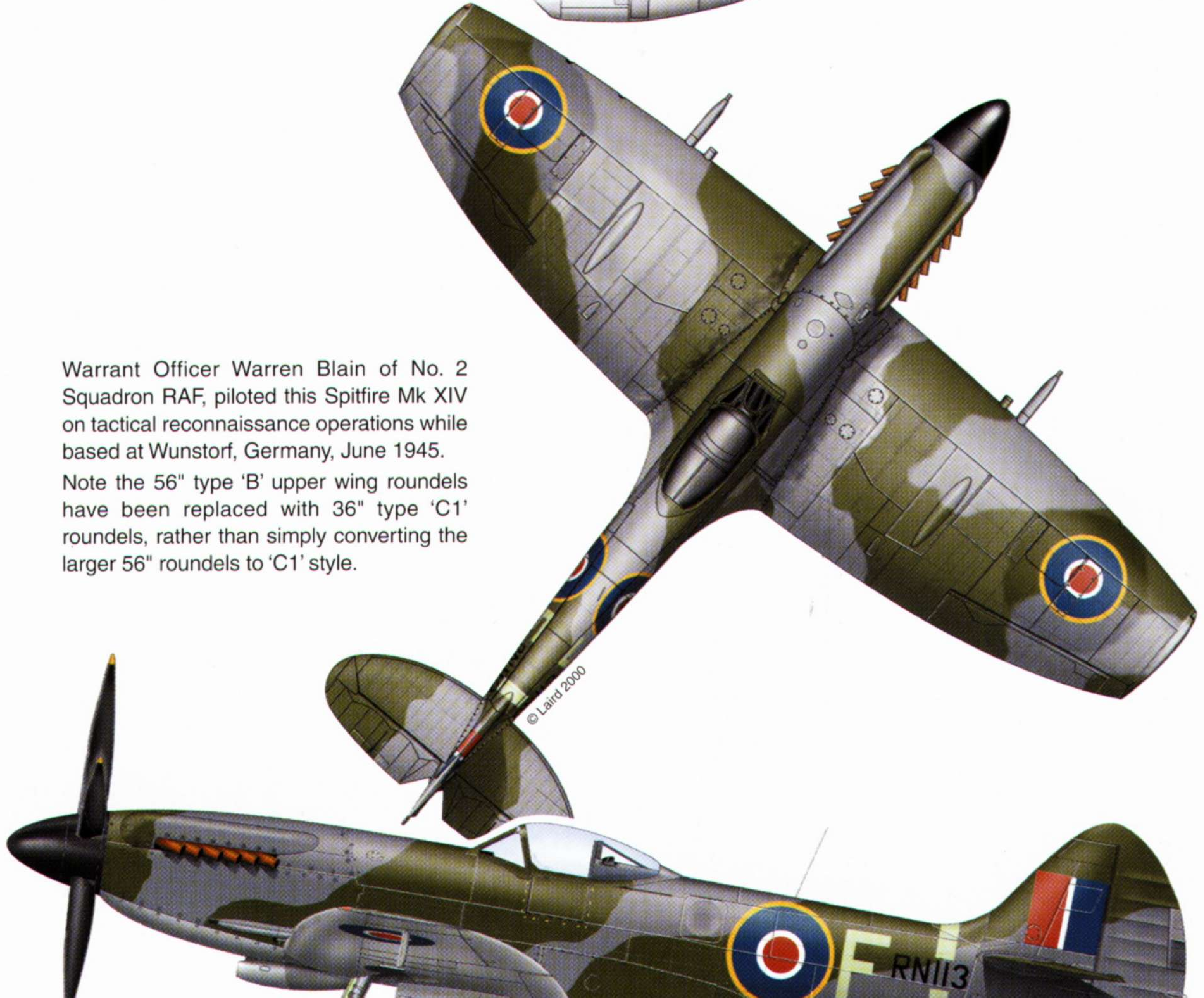
Warrant Officer Warren Blain of No. 2 Squadron RAF, piloted this Spitfire Mk XIV on tactical reconnaissance operations while based at Wunstorf, Germany, June 1945.

Note the 56" type 'B' upper wing roundels have been replaced with 36" type 'C1' roundels, rather than simply converting the larger 56" roundels to 'C1' style.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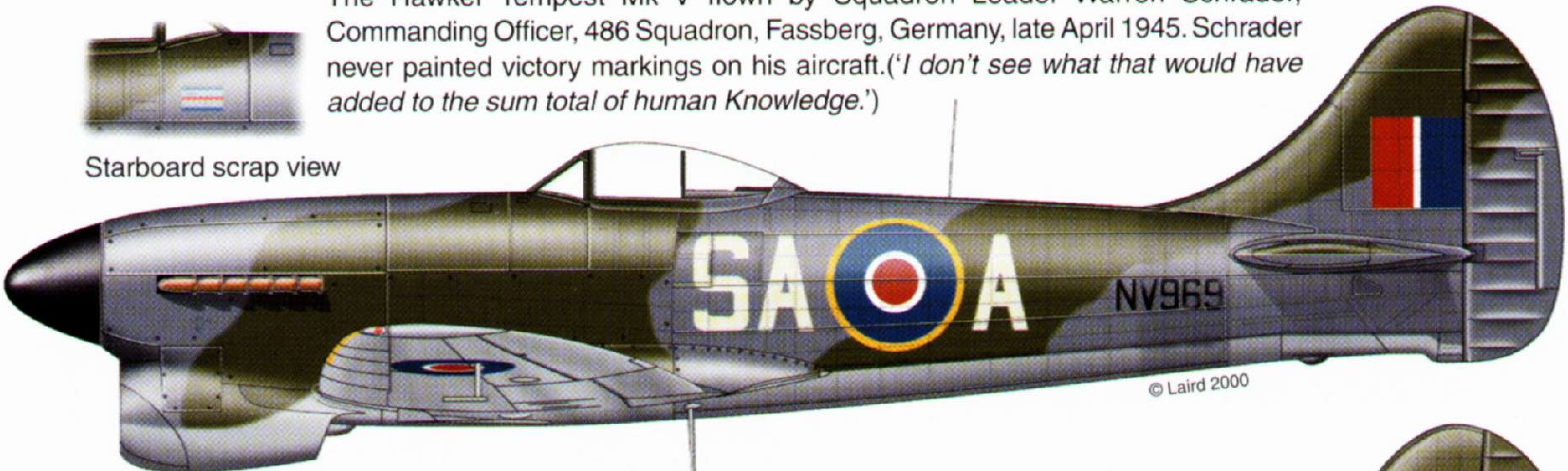
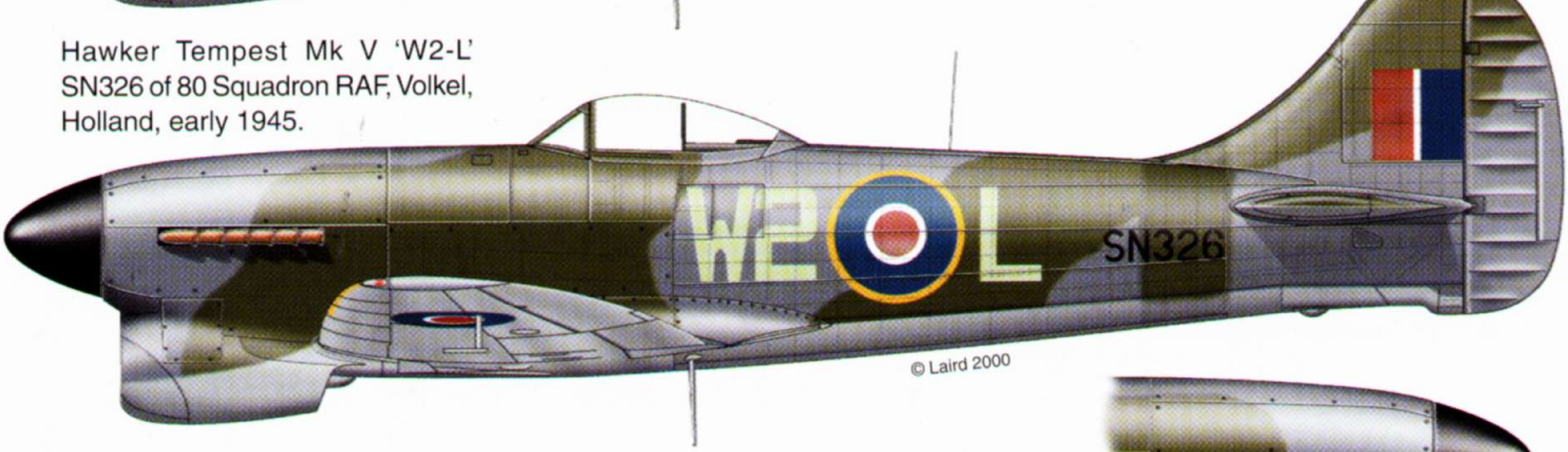
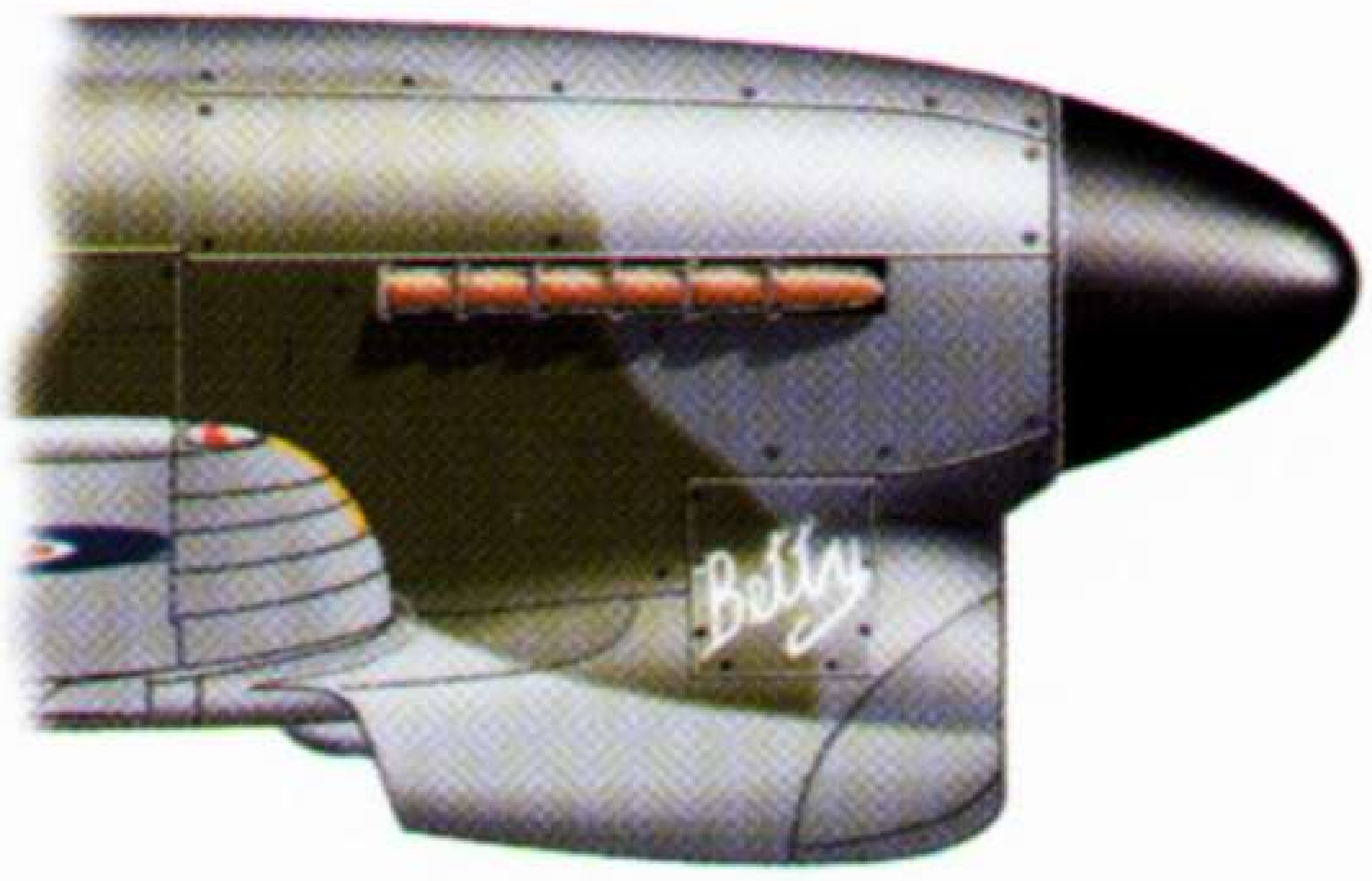
The Hawker Tempest Mk V flown by Squadron Leader Warren Schrader, Commanding Officer, 486 Squadron, Fassberg, Germany, late April 1945. Schrader never painted victory markings on his aircraft.(*'I don't see what that would have added to the sum total of human Knowledge.'*)


Starboard scrap view

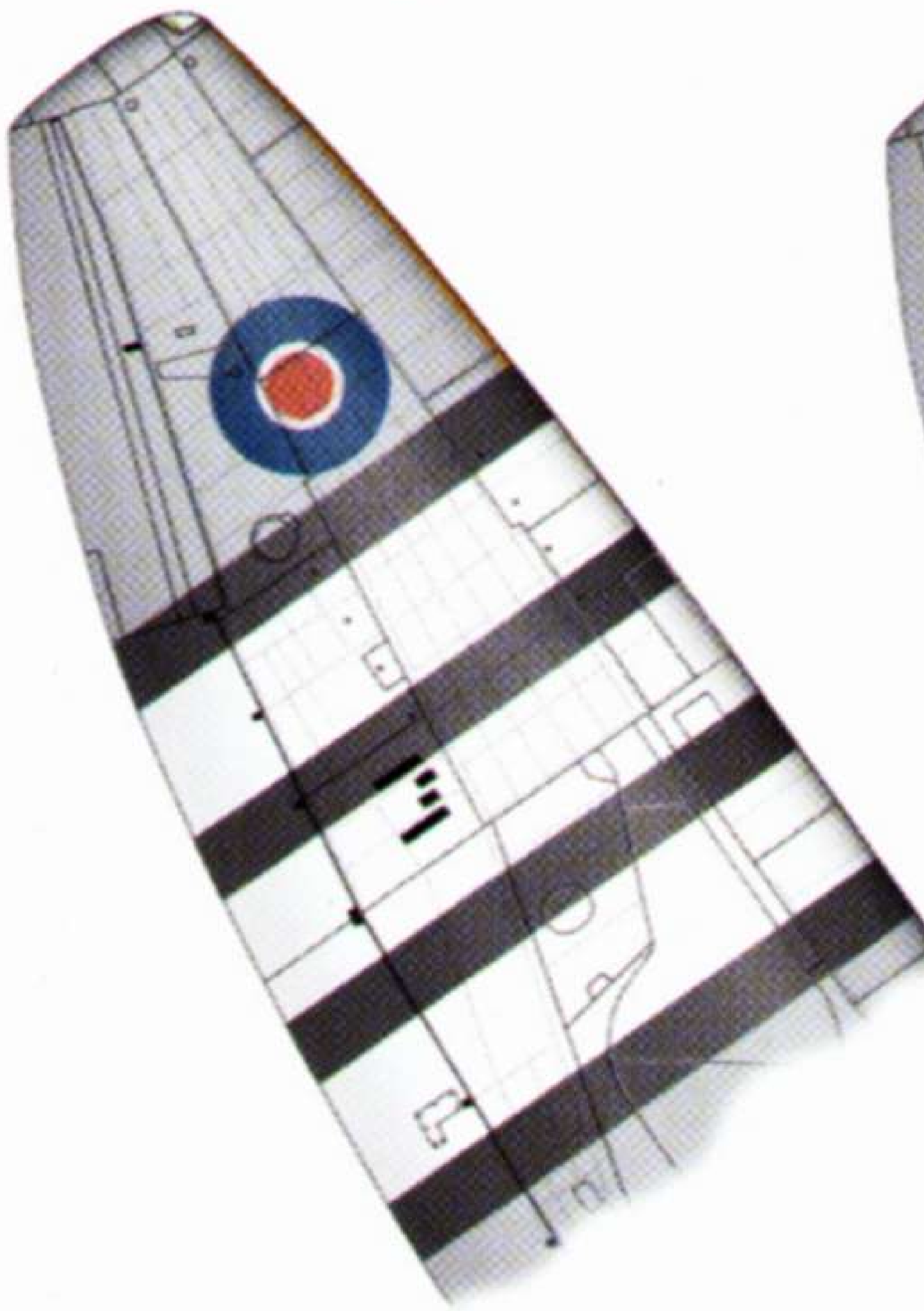
Hawker Tempest Mk V 'W2-L' SN326 of 80 Squadron RAF, Volkel, Holland, early 1945.



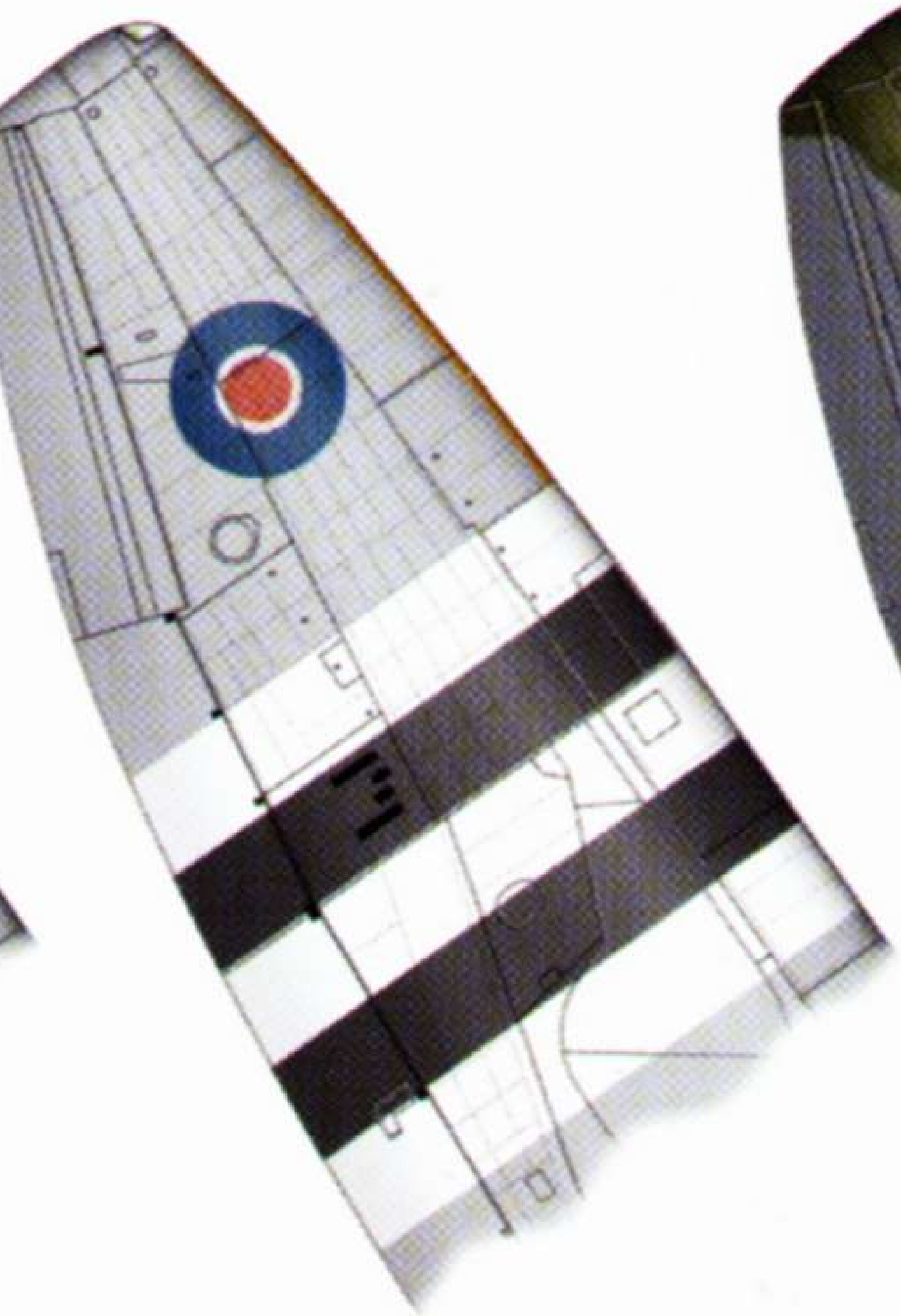


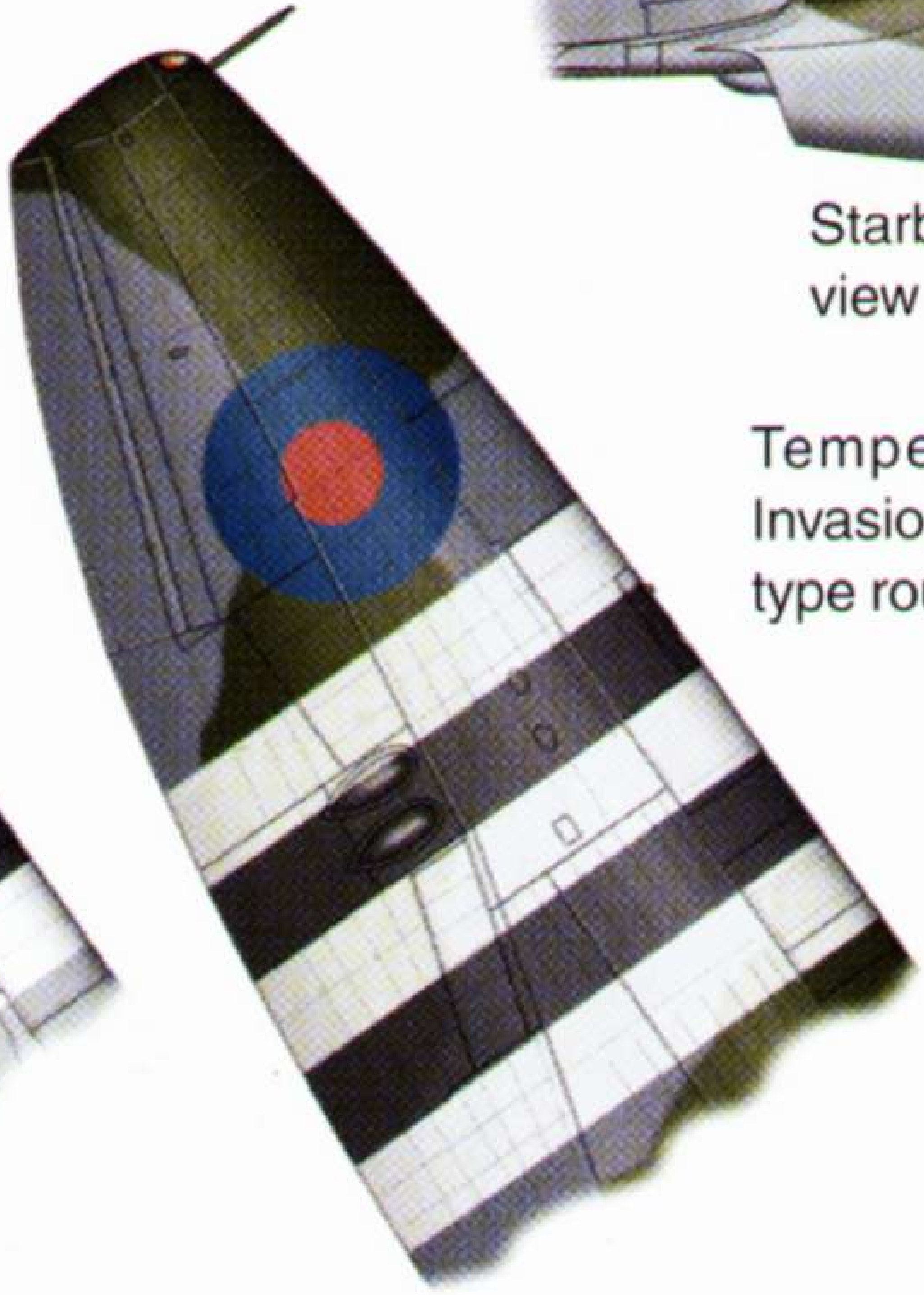
Starboard nose scrap view of 'W2-L'.

Tempest under wing recognition stripes, April 1944. 32" 'C' type Roundel.

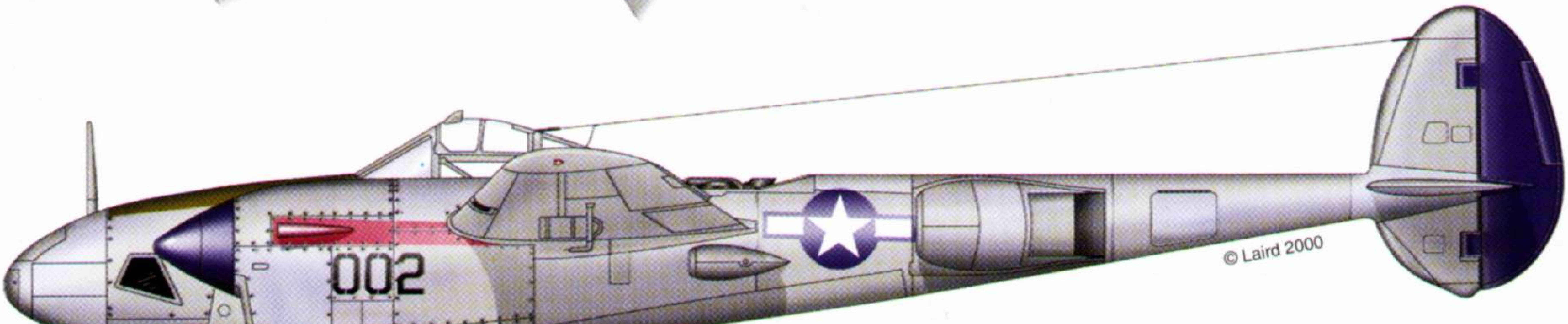


Tempest under wing Invasion stripes, June 1944. 32" 'C' type roundel.





Tempest upper wing Invasion stripes. 40" 'B' type roundel, June 1944.



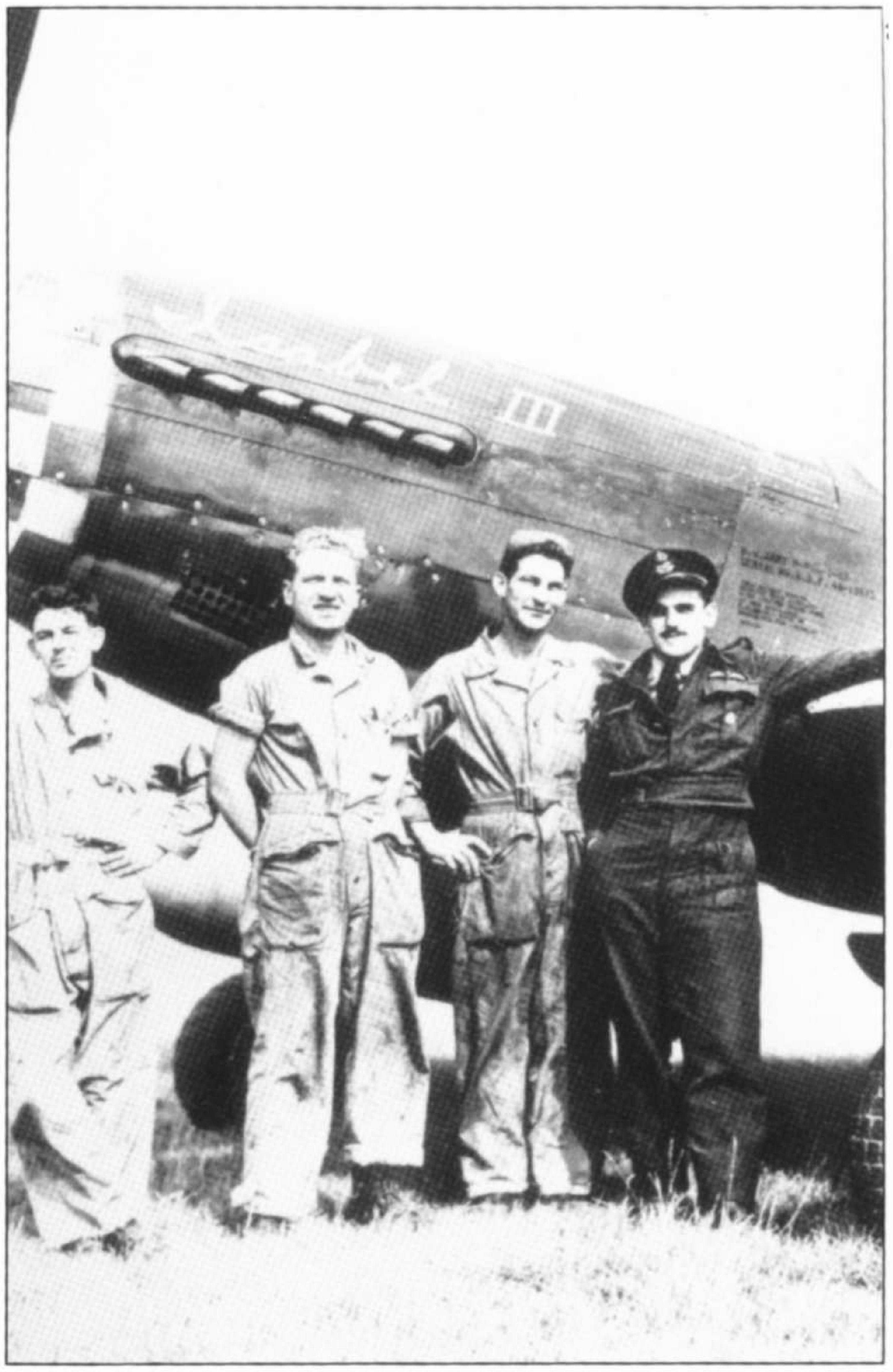
An F-5B Lightning of the USAAF 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group, Mount Farm, Oxfordshire, 1945.

On 8 August, Flight Lieutenant Cleland was one of the 63 Mustangs that did the 5 hours 50 minutes to San Severo, Italy. This was via the oil refineries at Ploesti, Rumania, which received close attention from the 95th and 339th BG B-17s. No doubt all were grateful for a rest the following day; the only air activity on the 9th occurring when eight P-51s, that had aborted yesterdays mission, flew in.

For 10 August, Jacks logbook notes: "Escorted six Dakotas from Italy to Yugoslavia and back. Most interesting". On arrival, these transport planes had to land at a grass field on a mountain top to pick up escaped prisoners of war and evaders. No enemy aircraft were seen. Jack landed back at San Severo after 5 hours 30 minutes, very happy, as were all 38 pilots who took part in this rescue mission.

After a days rest, the 12 August brought the final, homeward leg of the mission. The B-17s were to bomb Toulouse airfield in Southern France. In the target area an unfortunate accident occurred when a Junkers Ju 88 was reported at 29,000 feet. One of the pilots from 364th Fighter Squadron closed in behind the aircraft and, over enthusiastic, opened fire. It was a Mosquito Mk XVI, one of two from the 8th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron reporting weather conditions and other information direct to the bomber leader. The Mosquito's navigator bailed out of the stricken aircraft but the pilot was not so lucky, being killed in the crash.

When Flight Lieutenant Cleland finally touched down at Leiston he had been airborne for an incredible 7 hours and 35 minutes. It was the longest flight he was to make in a fighter during his service career. He then had two days off and it is likely that at this time he painted 'Isabel III' in yellow letters outlined in white on the nose of 'B6-B'. Two black victory crosses were added and his aircraft code was changed from 'B6-B' to 'B6-V'. Jack flew 'Isabel III' with this latter code until the end of his tour[1].



Flight Lieutenant Jack Cleland and his ground crew with their aircraft in late August 1944. From the left are Louis Barry, William Sutherland, unknown and Jack Cleland. The two victory crosses represent the two Fw 190s Cleland shot down on 12 June while a member of 616 Squadron, RAF.

This aircraft was received in natural metal finish, but because the 357th anticipated operating from France in the immediate post D-Day period, they needed to camouflage their aircraft for better concealment on the ground. American camouflage paint stocks were limited in the summer of 1944 and so the Group painted a high proportion of their Mustangs, including this one, in RAF *Dark Green* upper surfaces and *Medium Sea Grey* under surfaces. (A Cleland)

FINALE

After only two days rest, Flight Lieutenant Cleland was back on the busy schedule of escort missions; often strafing ground targets on the trip home, as he helped to reduce the road and rail stock of the enemy. For 18 August, after escorting B-26 medium bombers to Paris, his log book records "Clobbered train on way back and 700 German soldiers bailed out into nearby field". After the Mustangs had finished their strafing runs about half of the unfortunate German soldiers lay dead or wounded. Once back safely at Leiston, the aircraft were quickly refuelled and rearmed with 2x500lb bombs for a 1500 hours mission. A tunnel, trains, rolling stock, rail tracks and a station suffered the attention of Colonel Graham and 34 other Mustang pilots. Jack's tally was four trucks and three staff cars. One technique perfected in August, when attacking German airfields, was to release their drop tanks and strafe them. The exploding tanks added 'weight' to the P-51's fire power.

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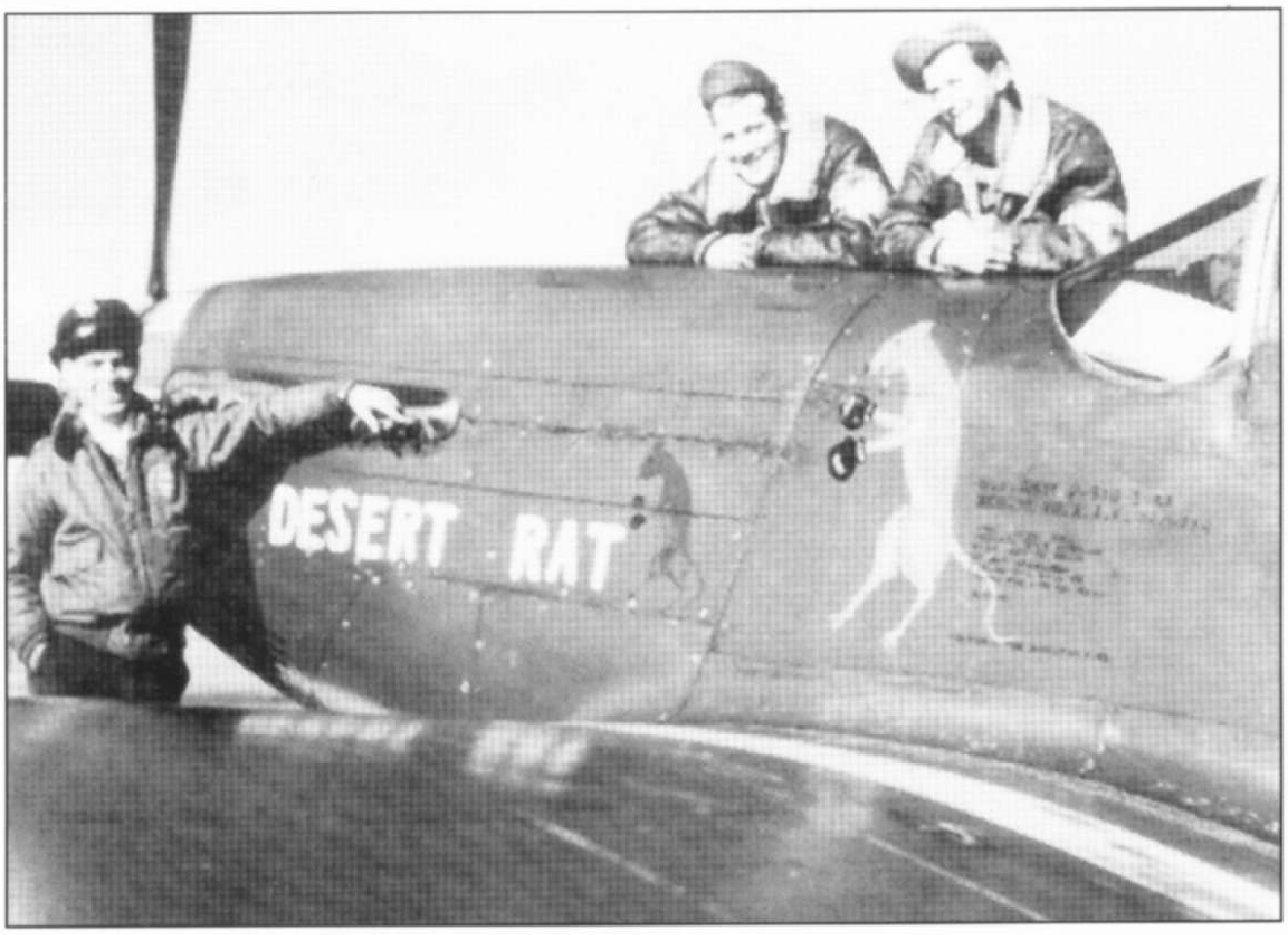
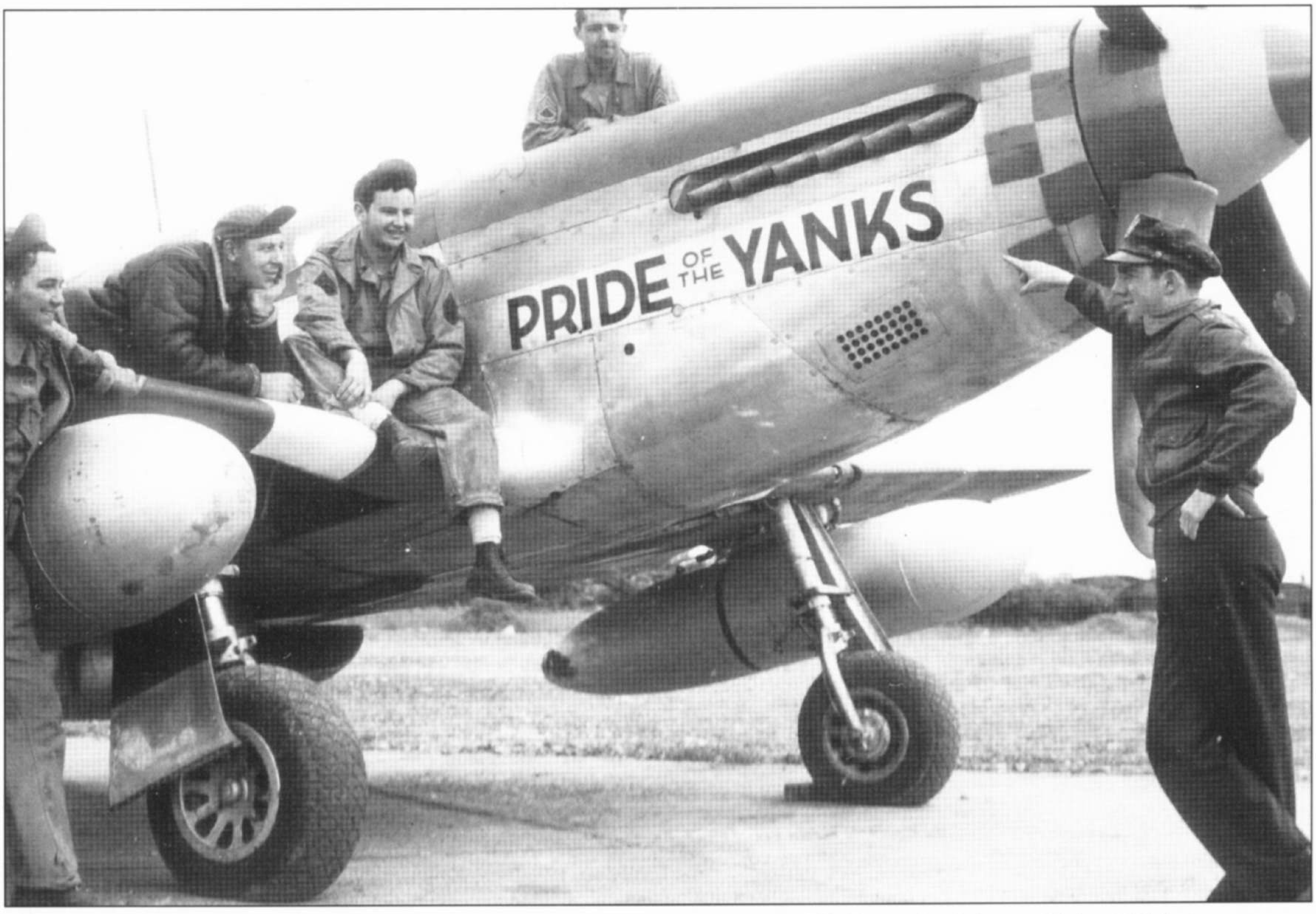
[1] The 'V' code had belonged to Robert Foy flying P-51D, code 'B6-V' 44-13712, 'Reluctant Rebel'. He ended his first combat tour with the 363rd FS in late July, 1944. After Jack returned to the RAF, the 'B6-V' code was taken back by Robert Foy when he rejoined the 363rd FS for his second tour. This time he was assigned a P-51D, 44-63621, which he named 'Little Shrimp'. Robert Foy finished the war with 17 aircraft destroyed in the air, the highest scoring ace to fly with the 363rd FS.

When Jack Cleland landed at Leiston on 5 September 1944, after 5 hours 5 minutes escorting bombers to Stuttgart; it brought the curtain down on his third and final combat tour. On 6 September he returned to 616 Squadron; now based at Manston, Kent and operating a full complement of Spitfire Mk VIIs, plus a detached flight of Gloster Meteors. It was on 23 September that he took a Spitfire Mk VII to Leiston to show his American comrades, then on the 25th, Jack bade the 357th goodbye for the last time. He returned to Manston to await his next posting. It was to be as an instructor at No. 53 Operational Training Unit.

Jack Cleland died of cancer in 1970 and his late wife Isabel, after whom his aircraft were named, passed away in 2000. They are survived by their four children, Norman, Richard, Bruce and Alison.



Hershel Pascoe and his ground crew with their P-51D, 'B6-B' 44-13714 named 'Desert Rat'. This is why Jack Clelands aircraft was coded 'B6-B'. Pascoe flew the Frantic V mission to Russia, but in a different flight to Cleland. Pascoe scored one aerial victory before being shot down and taken prisoner on 12 October 1944. (Joe De Shay via T Neilsen)



P-51C 'Pride of the Yanks' was flown by Charles Sumner with the 364th FS. From the left are: Robert Picket, armourer; Arthur Koval, Assistant Crew Chief; Lee Henley, Crew Chief; Joe De Shay, Flight Chief and Sumner, who finished the war credited with 4½ aerial victories. (J De Shay via T Neilsen.)

FIGHTERS AT NIGHT

The Nightfighter Squadrons attached to the Allied Air Forces in Europe in 1944 approached their task with an ever increasing sophistication. RAF Squadrons flew De Havilland Mosquitos while their USAAF counterparts increasingly re-equipped with the Northrop P-61 Black Widow, at that time the only aircraft designed from the outset as a nightfighter.

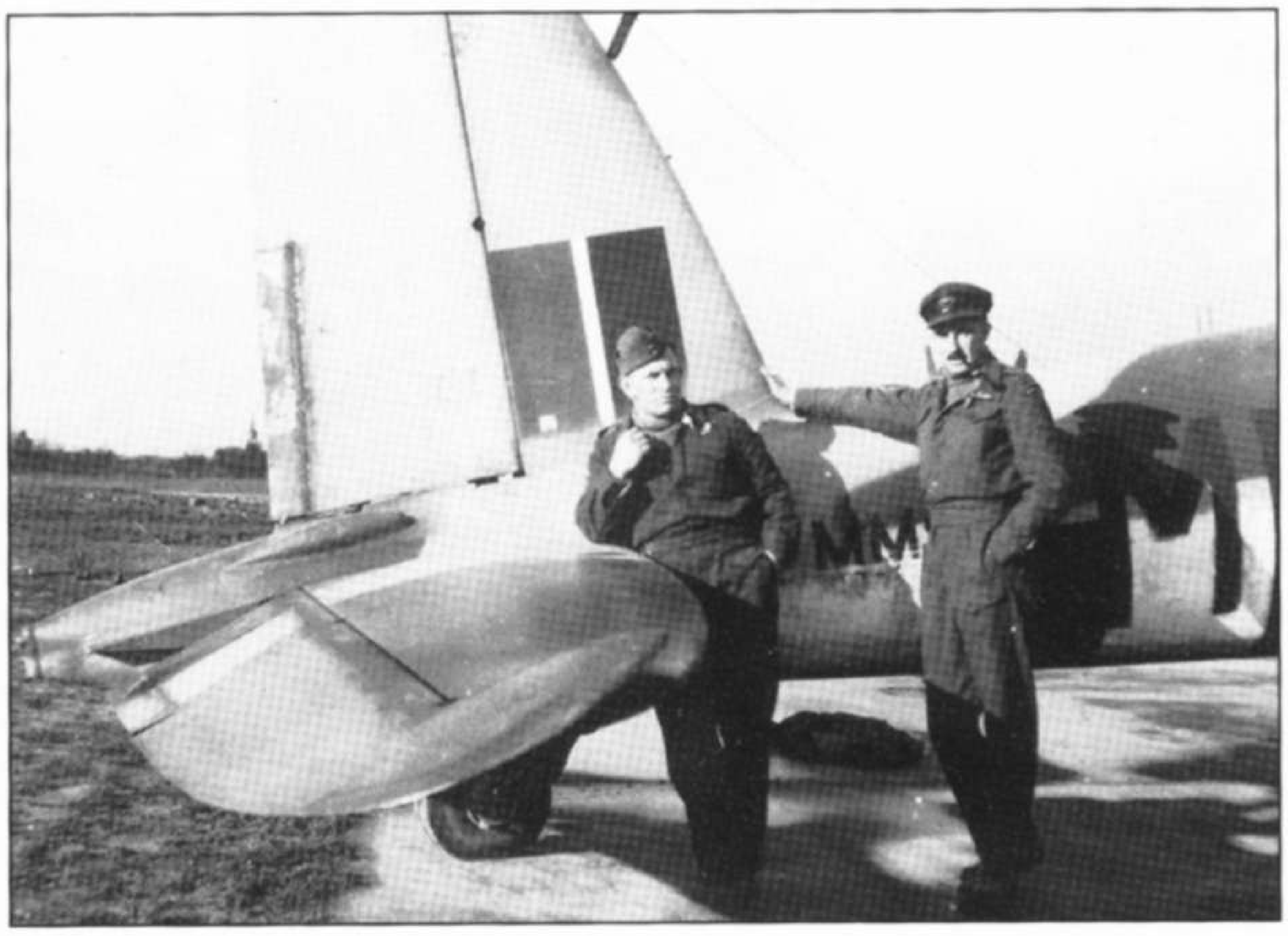
This chapter is a first hand account by Allott Gabites, a member of 488 (NZ) Squadron 2nd Tactical Air Force and is adapted from his self-published book 'Monkeys Birthday'.

TO FRANCE

The Squadron moved to Europe in November 1944 from Hunsdon, near London, to Amiens, France.

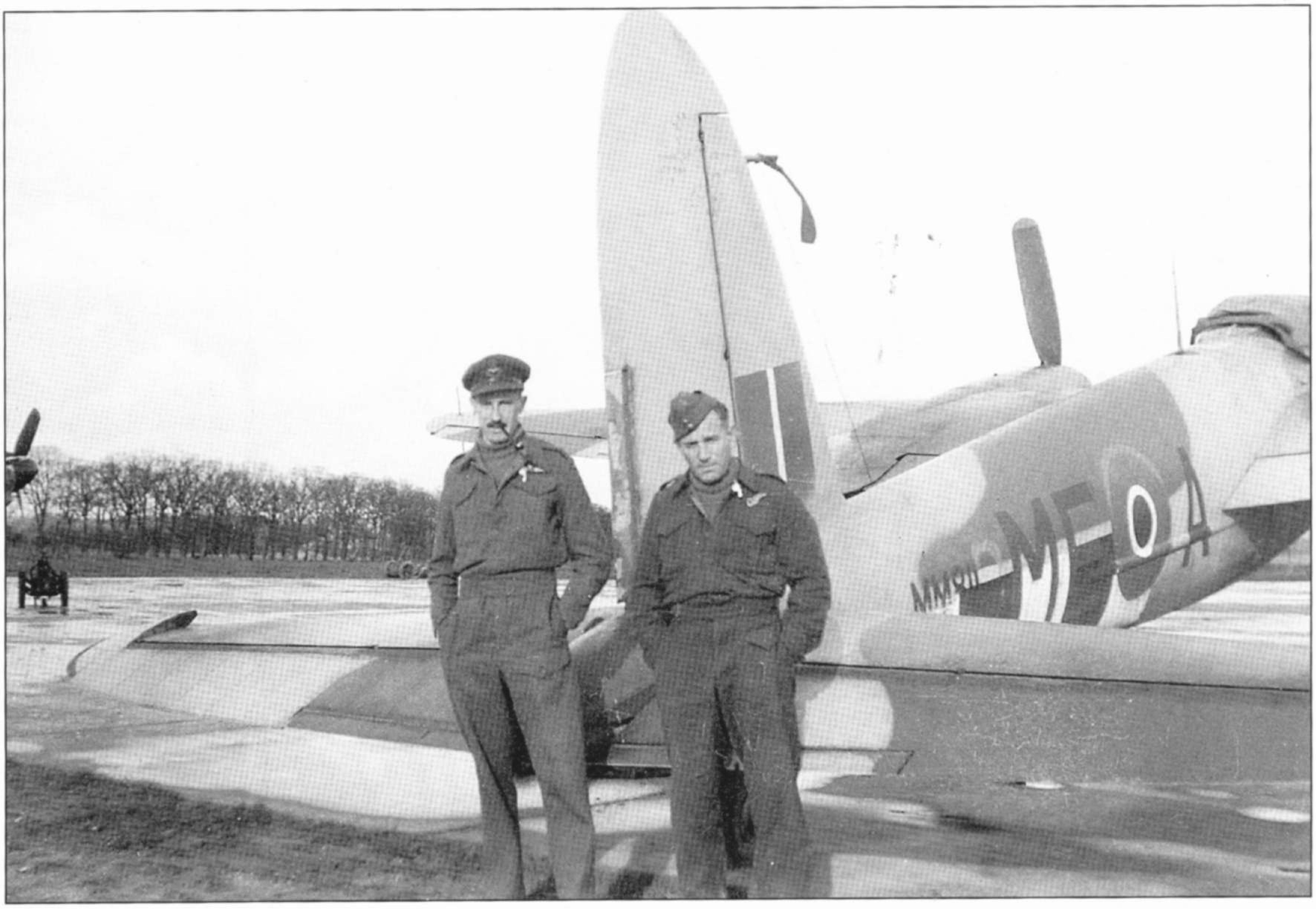
"Amiens-Glisy airfield had been constructed by the Germans who, in retreat, adopted a scorched-earth policy towards all buildings, especially hangars and living quarters. Buildings which hadn't been destroyed by Allied bombing were systematically rendered uninhabitable. Thus we found ourselves quartered in a motley collection of wooden huts, with boarded-up windows and snow drifts high up the walls (which sealed off any draughts). There were lots of grey blankets, but one still went to bed more-or-less in full flying kit, including our fleece-lined flying boots.

Our ground crews worked long and hard on our Mosquitos in the most severe conditions, in makeshift shelters and took a great pride in their work. On one occasion they actually fitted a linoleum



Above and **below**. Flying Officer Allott Gabites and Navigator/Radar Operator Flying Officer Phillip Bryers. The two men served all their time in 488 Squadron together, having met at their OTU.

The battered appearance of parts of their Mosquito NF Mk 30's, (MM811) tail surfaces is due to a petroleum jelly substance smeared on as an anti-icing measure. Some winter nights in France the temperature dropped to –30°F. Ground crews swept the entire surface of each wing with buckets of de-icing fluid every half hour, on aircraft being kept at readiness. (A Gabites)



floor into a new Mosquito to make it more comfortable!

When 488 Squadron moved up to Gilze-Rijen, the German army still occupied the territory north of the Meuse which was about six miles from the airfield. There were a number of Flying bomb sites just over the river with their launching ramps aimed at the port of Antwerp, which was being reopened as a main supply route for the Allied armies. Our airfield lay directly on the path of these missiles and occasionally one would develop a fault in its autopilot mechanism and get completely out of control. We were standing outside our dispersal one evening watching these unmanned aircraft fly over when one suddenly dropped a wing and began to turn back towards the airfield. It lost height rapidly and headed straight for us. After the event it was interesting to recall the reactions of the various Squadron members in the few seconds as the bomb approached. Whether to hold one's ground or fall flat on one's face? Personally, I stood rooted to the spot, totally unable to move. Some of the others threw themselves on to the ground. There was a terrific explosion as the thing landed and made a large crater on the other side of a hut from me, breaking its windows and lifting the roof.

This photograph well illustrates the bulbous radar nose and wide 'paddle blade' propeller, both characteristic of the de Havilland Mosquito NF Mk 30, operated by 488 Squadron.

This Mk 30 had suffered an undercarriage collapse when landed by Wing Commander Beaumont, on the right, with his radar operator, at RAF Predannack in Cornwall 1944. Note the Wing Commanders pennant painted below the cockpit. (D Kain)

Our patrols were carried out far into Germany and my logbook records night patrols during November around such cities of the Third Reich as: Krefeld, Aachen, Gladback and Cologne. It was unpleasant, and indeed somewhat unnerving, to be caught occasionally in searchlights; but the greatest threat, apart from the hazards of icing-up, was from enemy nightfighters. At that stage we had no rear-looking radar and we relied entirely on the speed of the Mosquito to avoid interception. There were other Mosquitoes patrolling on most nights and one heard some interesting conversations. One such exchange between an RAF pilot and the Ground Controller sounded like a music-hall act...

'I say, old chap. That "friendly" you put me on to is a Me 110.'

'Sorry old man, why don't you shoot it down?'

'As a matter of fact, I have.'

'Good show.'

On one frequency I even heard some Luftwaffe pilots chattering away to each other in their native tongue. I couldn't resist calling them up...

'Belt up you dirty rotten Huns.'

Incredibly, the reply came back in perfect English.

'Shut up you filthy Britisher.'

One foggy night my Flight, 'A' Flight, was on stand-by when we heard a Junkers Ju 88 approach and circle near our airfield obviously looking for a target. We heard bursts of machine-gun fire, followed by a loud thumping sound. Some time later there was a call from our Group Headquarters which had been informed of a crashed Ju 88. This accident came about when the aircraft struck a lighting pylon in the Amiens rail yards. In the grey light of dawn I drove there with our Intelligence Officer to inspect the wreck. Three bodies had been pulled from the Ju 88 and a French policeman handed me a number of papers and identification tags. We collected a number of personal belongings for despatch to the Red Cross and I noticed that one of the dead German crew had a finger missing. I was sickened to hear that his gold ring had been removed, finger and all, before the police arrived. Later the Intelligence Officer told me that the German airgunner had carried a letter to his mother. It said, among other things, that he was looking forward to coming home for his next birthday. It would have been his seventeenth."

A 'DAY' AT THE OFFICE

"Before each night operation it was necessary to test the aircraft during daylight. This involved a test flight and checking the sixteen high-frequency radio channels we used. There were long nights waiting at readiness in our makeshift dispersal hut when the weather closed in and flying was abandoned. But we sat around in our flying boots, scarves and lambswool jackets in case the telephone rang for a scramble. We were an all-weather unit and if the Germans flew, we had to respond, foul weather or not. Parachutes were already in the aircraft and basic cockpit checks completed so that, with radio and oxygen plugged in, we could be airborne in less than a minute.

The 2nd Tactical Air Force nightfighter squadrons employed a system whereby aircrews were on duty for 48 hours night and day, and were then allowed two days to relax. This gave us time to make excursions exploring the countryside either by jeep or on foot. There were walks along the banks of the Somme and visits to the remarkable Amiens Cathedral. Interestingly, a plaque inside attached to one of those ancient stone columns, commemorates the sacrifices of the New Zealand Division in the defence of the town in 1916. Other reminders of that time were all around the airfield. We took off over a white marble memorial to the Australian Light Horse and almost every ridge seemed to have a World War One cemetery.

On a lighter note, one day we were carrying out an air test when an American B-25 Mitchell flew alongside challenging us to a speed test; so I gave the Merlins a burst and began to overtake him. At almost full throttle we managed to establish a clear lead and, not wishing to over-stress the Merlins, I broke off the contest. Then Phil said, 'That looks like Paris down there.' I dropped through a hole in the cloud and levelled out at about 500 ft to see the Eiffel Tower flash past on our port bow. At nearly 1,000 ft high it was a dirty grey and streaked with rust from obvious neglect."

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

"Towards Christmas 1944 a great blanket of fog descended over Northern Europe. This encouraged Hitler to make his last great gamble.

THE 'Q' SITE

In World War II the RAF employed an army of back-room boys to develop ways of fooling the enemy. One bright idea was to install a dummy flare path about 3 miles down the road from our airfield and switch off the main airfield lights. The basic idea was sound, but it was a well-kept secret where such devices were to be employed. In fact, very few were set up and were virtually unheard of on the squadrons. So well-kept was the secret that I personally became aware of only one – I was to find out about it the hard way. They were to be named, quite appropriately, 'Q-Sites', after the deceptive 'Q' Ships of World War One.

The flying weather that winter of 1944/45 was appalling with the freezing level at zero feet for weeks on end. One night, in early March 1945, the low cloud which preceded a wall of foul weather had not yet reached Amiens. While the air armadas based in Britain and the German Air Force defenders were all stood down; our lone Mosquito took off from Amiens to patrol the bridgehead the US 9th Armoured Division had established on the eastern banks of the Rhine at Remagen. As we climbed on course for Remagen I can remember Phil remarking that for one night we were the spearhead of the great Allied invasion of Germany. In a brief moment of glory we were alone in carrying the air war to the enemy!

(*continued next page*)

Without support (or opposition) from the air, the German army broke through in the Ardennes. There were days of confused fighting which became known as the 'Battle of the Bulge'. Initially the Allied Air Forces were grounded by the weather, and 488 Squadron at Amiens, was held in readiness to cover any night activities. But it wasn't until Christmas Day that we operated over the battle area. By 27 December the crisis on the ground was under control and the weather in the Ardennes had cleared so that the American and British ground attack squadrons could destroy the enemy supply columns."

488's Last 'Ace'

"In the aftermath of the 'Battle of the Bulge' the Luftwaffe assembled all available aircraft and staged an early morning raid on Allied airfields in Northern France and Belgium on New Years day, 1945. It so happened that on the same night one of our pilots, Flight Lieutenant Kenneth 'Chunky' Stewart, was badly shot up by the aerodrome defences of the German nightfighter base at Rheine, as he stalked a Luftwaffe nightfighter. With his hydraulics shot away he headed for Brussels and successfully put his Mosquito down on the main runway. Soon afterwards, as dawn approached, hoards of Fw 190's attacked. Tucked under the wing of a USAAF B-17 Flying Fortress the Mosquito escaped further damage, but was surrounded by burning aircraft. That was the scene of destruction which greeted Phil and I, when we landed at dawn on 2 January to collect 'Chunky' and his navigator Bill Brumby.

One night in February 'Chunky' and Bill were patrolling over Holland when Ground Control warned that they were being followed by an unidentified aircraft. An etherial night dogfight ensued between the two nightfighters guided entirely by their own radar. With a great deal of weaving about 'Chunky' managed to get behind the other aircraft. After a brief visual contact it was identified as a Junkers Ju 88G nightfighter. Following a short burst of cannon fire on a fairly wide deflection, it blew up in mid-air. This had been a duel to the death between closely-matched opponents, in which the outcome was determined by superior flying and gunnery skills and a small but significant edge in technology.

(from previous page)

We arrived at the patrol line at 10,000 feet to be greeted by a display of 'friendly' light flak. We could distinguish the bridgehead through the ground fog by a concentration of floodlights, flares and tracer and kept a respectful distance from this hive of ground activity.

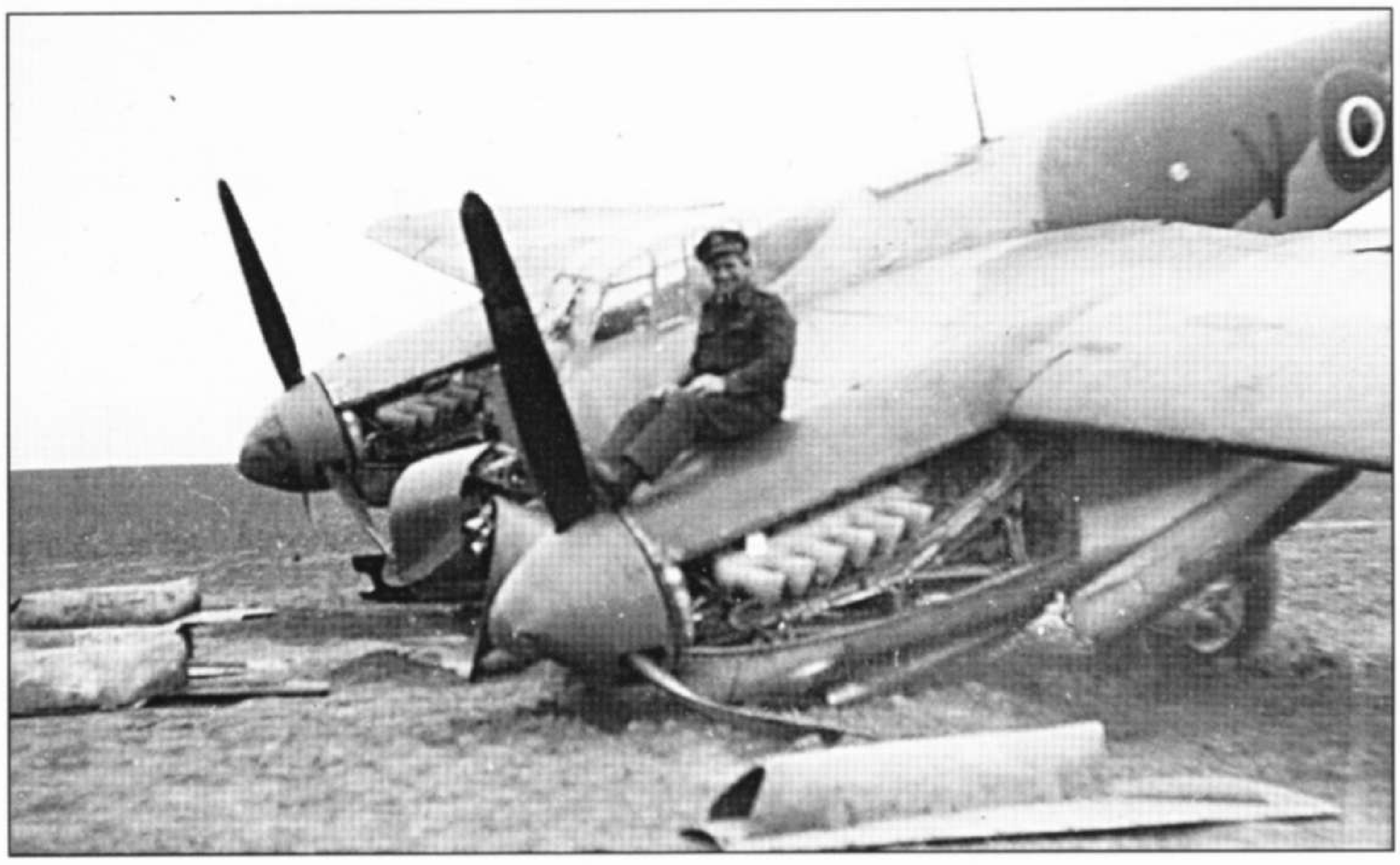
After completing our patrol we picked up the radar beacon at Lille, but the weather had clamped down completely and from the air there wasn't a glimmer of light to be seen. And, what's more, Ground Control knew of nowhere else to go, but thought that Amiens might still be open. As I orbited the beacon at Amiens with all petrol gauges looking decidedly sick, a patch of fog lifted and I glimpsed a flare path under one wing.

'Hallelujah, I'm coming in!'

As the wheels touched a brilliant red Very light flashed under the port wing, but there was no time to grasp its significance as the aircraft was already settling into the landing attitude. Then all hell broke loose as the aeroplane

(continued next page)

Number 488 (NZ) Squadron members, Flight Lieutenant Kenneth W 'Chunky' Stewart on the right & radar operator Flying Officer Harold E 'Bill' Brumby with Mosquito NF Mk 30, NT263, showing their 5½ victory markings, April 1945. Both were decorated with the DFC for their successes in the winter and spring of 1944/5. (A Gabites)



On the night of 26 March 1945 'Chunky' and 'Bill' were again patrolling the Rhine bridgehead and managed to intercept a Me 110 which, after a short burst, hit the ground with a brilliant explosion. Their radar then partially malfunctioned but they managed to contact a Heinkel He 111. 'Chunky' gave it a burst or two and it went into a steep dive. At the same time he realized that he was being chased by a German nightfighter and had to break off the engagement. That night the 488 Squadron 'B' Flight score was two destroyed and one damaged, for the loss of one Mosquito.

Following these successes there were many hours of patient patrolling and sky-searching and it was well into April before 'Chunky' and Bill were directed on to a 'Bogey' over the Ruhr. In the long chase that followed, the rear gunner on the Me 110 opened fire on the Mosquito several times, but 'Chunky' was not able to bring his sights to bear and fire his own guns. Presently a small fire started in the tail of the Messerschmitt which grew and grew until the enemy aircraft dived into the ground and exploded. Although their guns had not been fired, 'Chunky' and Bill were credited with one enemy aircraft destroyed – the enemy's tracer had set fire to his own tail!

Thus 'Chunky', in a comparatively short time had brought his score up to five enemy aircraft destroyed and one damaged. Recognition of this achievement was to come with the award of Distinguished Flying Crosses to both 'Chunky' and Bill. They were to be the Squadron's last Aces."

A Woman in Uniform

"Late one night 'A' Flight aircrews were in the dispersal hut at Amiens-Glisy at readiness when an unfamiliar Mosquito landed. While it was being refuelled the crew of two joined us in the hut for a mug of tea. I shall never forget the shock when we realized that the RAF pilot was accompanied by a female figure in the uniform of an Army Captain. Apparently they were to penetrate deep into enemy-held territory at low level with a short-range radio to contact pockets of the underground Resistance. Picking their way between defended areas at treetop level called for some finesse and we wished them all the luck in the world. In those days the concept of airborne combatant roles for women was virtually unheard of."

Glen Miller is missing

"During this period V1 Flying bombs were still getting through to London, in spite of the best efforts of the RAF. It was decided to establish a concentrated belt of light anti-aircraft guns along the Continental coast. Aircraft were totally prohibited from flying across this narrow zone below 7,000 ft, and we were only too happy to observe this order to the letter. But one day our Intelligence Officer reported that a light communications aircraft had wandered into this prohibited area and

(from previous page)

leapt high into the air again and then stalled sharply back on to the flare-path with a sickening crunch. Incredibly, we burst through a thicket of young trees which created an alarming racket as their bare branches whipped against the propellers and cockpit. The undercarriage held up through all this hammering, but shortly afterwards the port wheel sank deeply into a patch of soft ground and collapsed. Fortunately there was no fire, probably because the tanks were virtually dry!

My first reaction was one of entire disbelief. This turned to rage as I couldn't think where I had gone wrong. There was simply no explanation in my mind for this incredible landing.

By this time Phil managed to get the lower escape door open and was lying doubled up on the ground. I crawled out after him, in some pain as a knob on the instrument panel had smashed into my kneecap. I then climbed back into the cockpit to see if I could raise the ambulance on the radio.

The existence of the 'Q-site' was explained to me and it became clear that I had earlier missed a vital briefing on the subject, as I had only just returned from a Gunnery Leader's course in England. The dummy flare path was never used again as far as I know [as shortly afterwards 488 Squadron moved north to Holland]. (A Gabites) been shot down by our own guns. It so happened that Major Glenn Miller went missing that day on his way to a band concert in Paris. There have been a number of theories to account for his disappearance and, although it is not always wise to jump to conclusions, the true explanation could have been 'friendly fire' followed by a successful cover-up to avoid inter-Allied complications.

Another nightfighter Squadron operating de Havilland Mosquitos in 1944 was 456 (RAAF) Squadron. This photograph is from the collection of the late Robert (Bob) Richardson and may be Mosquito NF Mk XVII, NT296/G, which was flown by Flying Officer Richardson and his navigator/radar operator Flying Officer Landy on occasions.

The suffix 'G' after the serial number indicates that the aircraft is fitted with secret equipment and was to be guarded on the ground at all times (via P Roberts and A Lamb)

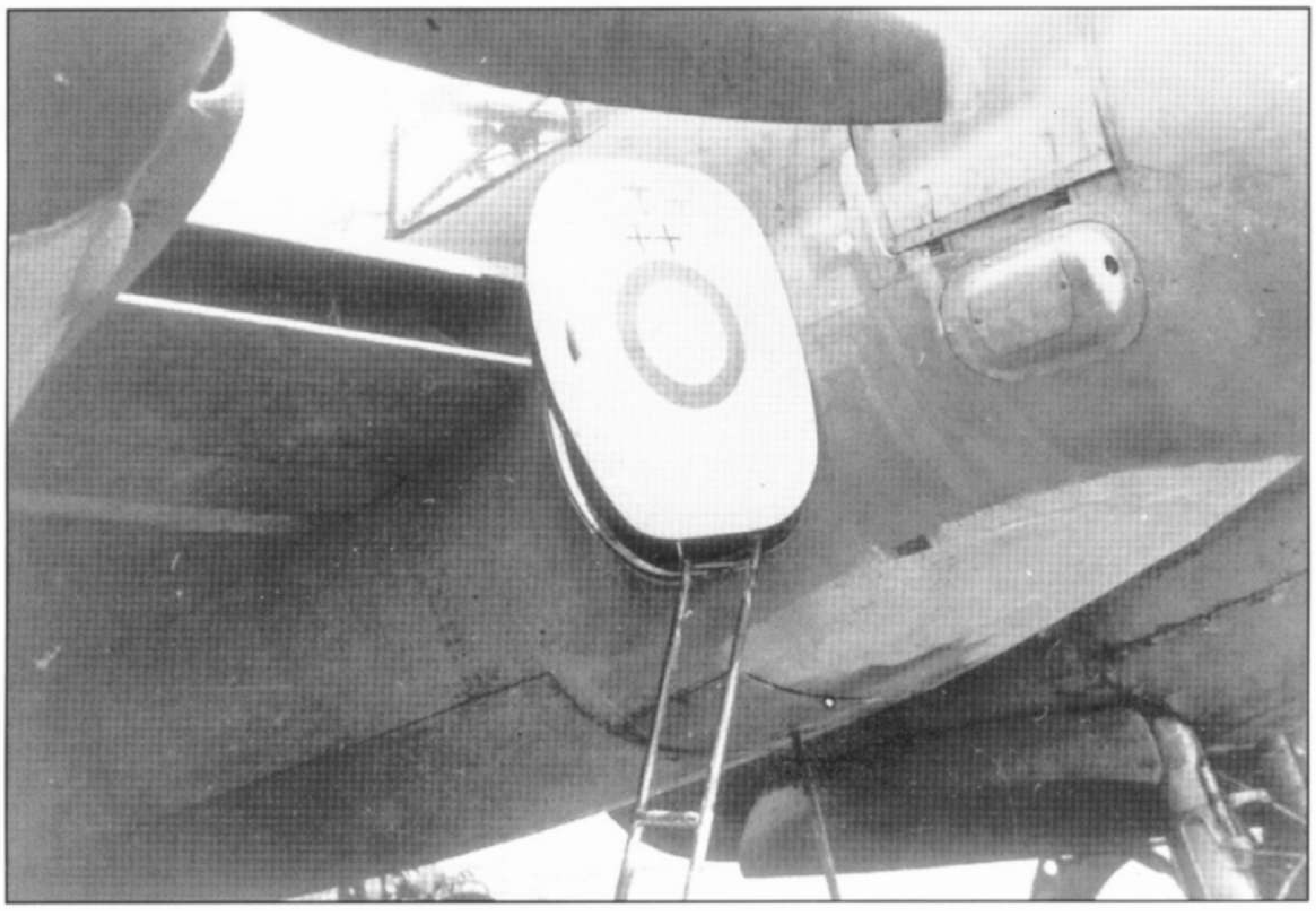
The occupation of southern Holland as far north as the Meuse allowed the Allies to take over the German nightfighter base of Gilze-Rijen early in the New Year. Although still based on Amiens, 488 Squadron used Gilze as an advance airfield so that our patrols could penetrate further into Germany. Having been a well-established Luftwaffe base, there were a number of useful and comfortable brick buildings remaining at Gilze; although the majority had been demolished either by Allied bombing or the retreating Germans. We were told that, on departing, the Gestapo had shot a number of the Dutch domestic workers and hidden their bodies under the floors of the wrecked buildings.

The surrounding forests of stunted pines were bristling with land mines booby-trapped with trip wires for the unwary, but small clearings among the trees gave good cover for the dispersal of aircraft. This factor probably helped to minimise our losses when the German Air Force launched its last great offensive (with over 1,000 fighter aircraft) on our forward airfields, early morning on New Year's Day."

A CAPTURED B-24 LIBERATOR

"On one occasion Phil and I were on a fairly long-range night patrol which took us up to the Baltic coast. The Ground Controller directed us on to an unidentified aircraft which appeared to be heading south from the Kiel area. I managed to identify a four-engine bomber with twin tails. This was obviously not a 'Hun', but to my surprise I was told to stick with it and shadow the stranger. In what seemed like a waste of time we did this all the way across northern Germany and Holland, with Phil fine tuning his radar contact while I practised attacks from all angles in gaps of clear air between the cloud masses. It was only after we landed that our Intelligence Officer gave us the explanation for this strange incident. Apparently the Germans had captured a serviceable Liberator from the Americans and were suspected of using it to parachute supplies to their beleaguered garrison in one of the Channel ports. Although Intelligence suspected that something like this was going on, nobody that night was prepared to give the order to shoot it down. The German crew all deserved the Iron Cross, First Class, and I hope that they survived to enjoy the peace.

In the last few months of the war we sometimes saw V2 rockets rising from their launch pads; painfully slowly at first amidst a sheet of flame, then accelerating up on their way to London.



Left and **below,** two photographs of Mosquito NF Mk XVII, HK290/G of 456 (RAAF) Squadron, flown by Flying Officer Fred Stevens with Flying Officer Andrew Kellett as radar operator.

On 5 July 1944 Stevens and Kellet shot down two German Heinkel He 177 heavy bombers and these victories are represented by the two Luftwaffe-style crosses on the aircraft's crew entry door. In the left photograph the suns glare is masking the kangaroo symbol in the centre of the roundel on the crew entry door.

From February to December 1944, 456 Squadron wes based at Ford in southern England where their duties were night defence and anti-V1 patrols. From Ford the Squadron moved to Church Fenton until March 1945 and finally to Bradwell Bay where, with the wars end, it was disbanded in June 1945.

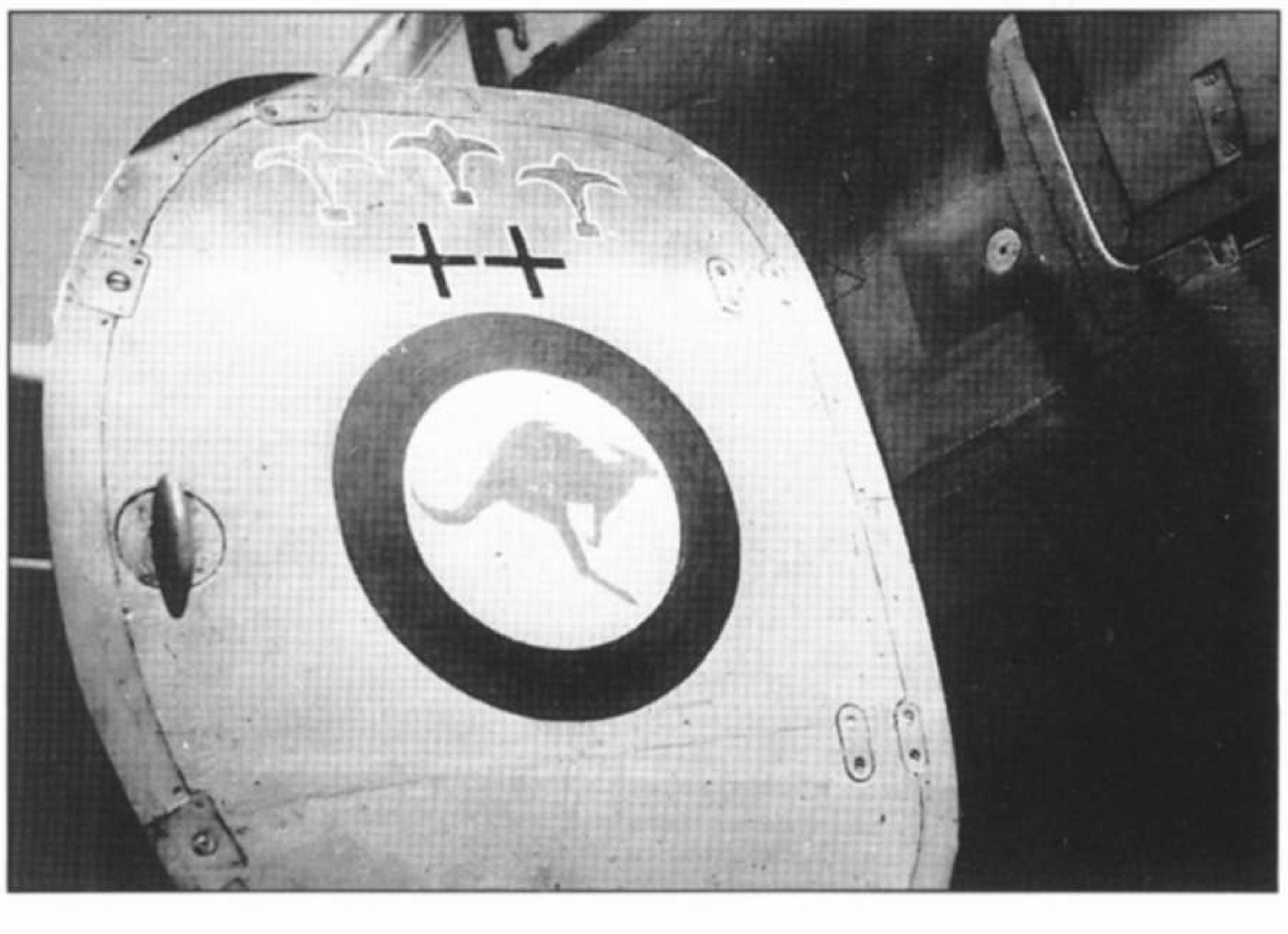
The camouflage scheme is the standard nightfighter scheme at the time of *Medium Sea Grey* overall with a disruptive pattern of *Dark Green* on upper surfaces. (via A Lamb)

On our off-duty days Phil and I hitched rides to a number of the liberated areas and were quite surprised at the way we were permitted to penetrate into towns which had been only recently captured. The troops of the First Canadian Division were most friendly and cooperative and lent us a jeep on one occasion. We pressed on northwards from Nijmegen and actually infiltrated as far as the town centre of Arnhem on the day that it was finally cleared of Germans by the Canadians. Civilians had long since been evacuated from Arnhem itself and the streets of the town centre were deserted, apart from a party of soldiers who were putting up rough signs at intervals to remind all that 'The penalty for looting is death'. Sporadic bursts of fire could be heard as snipers left by the retreating Germans were being rounded up towards the outskirts of the town. Damage seemed to be confined to shop windows and the pavements were littered with broken glass. We wandered into a deserted department store and were astonished to hear the strains of a Chopin Nocturne coming from the rear of the shop. A lone solder, completely lost to the world, was seated at a magnificent concert grand. We withdrew quietly so as not to disturb him.

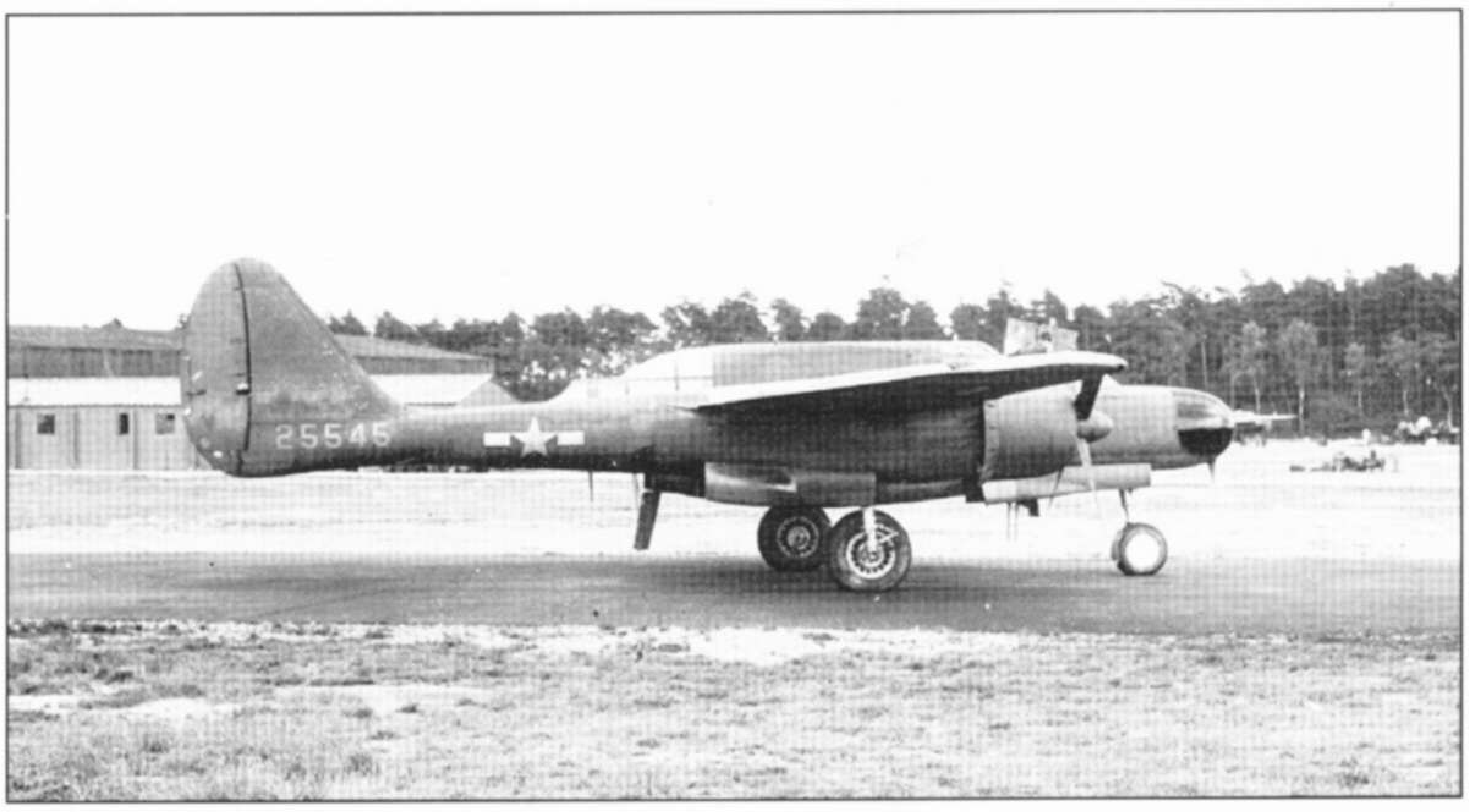
It was significant that Cleves, hometown of one of Henry VIII's wives, was reduced to rubble in the Allied advance to the bridgehead at Emmerich. This was the first town actually on German soil to be occupied, and as such gave the troops their first opportunity in two world wars to wreak a little havoc within the Fatherland itself – *the devastation was complete*.

With the shortening hours of darkness as winter gave way to spring in 1945, we sometimes found ourselves returning from patrol in daylight at a low level. Wherever possible our Mosquitoes were paired on these occasions so that one aircraft could weave from side to side to protect the tail of the other from attack, but generally we were on our own. I derived great satisfaction from flying up the main street of picturesque villages shouting 'Wakey, Wakey' for the benefit of the inhabitants still in bed. With roof tiles flying in all directions there would be a few leaky roofs to add to the troubles of the 'Master Race'.

Detail of the crew entry door of Mosquito Mk XVII, HK290/G. The three upper symbols representing V1s destroyed, are red with white outline. The two crosses are black with white outlines. (F Stevens and A Kellet)



Phil and I patrolled the Ruhr Valley with its great conurbation on the night of 4 April 1945. From 10,000 feet we could see intensive shellfire on all sides with fires burning as far as the horizon. From the air shellfire looks quite different from bombing, with many more smaller flashes and pinpricks of light. It must have been hell on the ground, but no doubt many of the civilian population would have been evacuated and those left would be ensconced in deep shelters. A few short weeks later these people were to emerge almost miraculously from the ruins, to clear the rubble and begin the process of rebuilding their homes and factories.



In 1945 USAAF Northrop P-61 Black Widow nightfighters, like this one, began to drop in on RAF forward airfields. Like many other RAF pilots, Allott Gabites felt their American Allies could be 'over-enthusiastic' and was grateful for the Invasion stripes which identified their aircraft. One rumour which circulated was that the American pilots fired their guns on landing if they found themselves running out of runway.

When 488 Squadron moved to Holland they found support given by the USAAF Air Transport Command, with their Curtiss C-46 Commandos, unstinted and invaluable. (A Gabites)

In those last few weeks before the German collapse the Luftwaffe was still fighting, but totally on the defensive. For our nightfighters there were fewer targets and our patrols took us as far as the advancing Russians in one of two sectors. We were issued with plastic Union Jack flags to hang around our necks with the words 'YA ANGLICHAHNIN' on the reverse. I'm sure that the peasant soldiers of the Soviet Union would not have been terribly impressed.

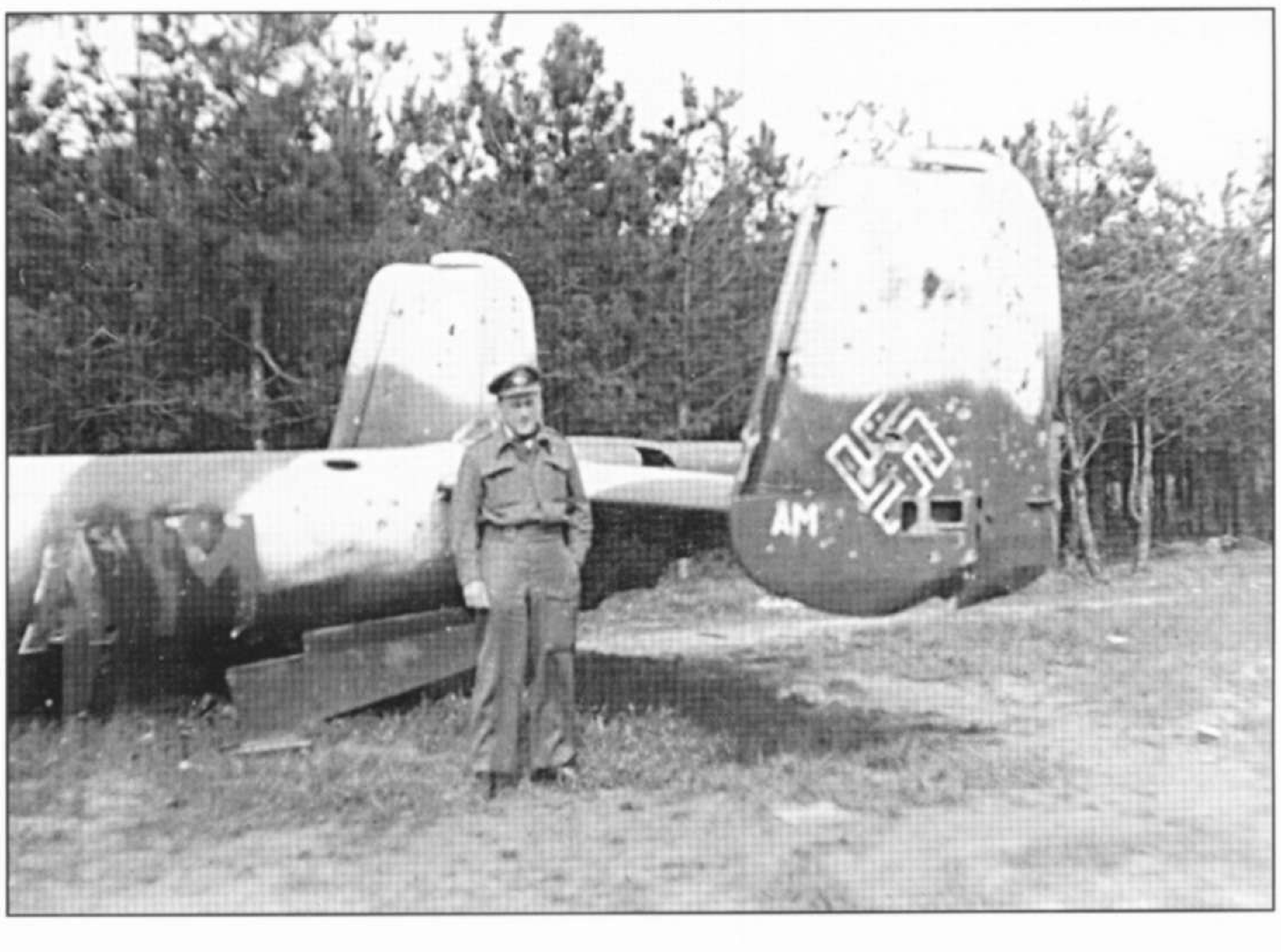
My logbook records a night patrol over the Hamburg-Hanover area on 21st April, 1945 and I well remember this occasion. I had hoped to get airborne early, as Intelligence reported the possibility of German transport planes filled with high-ranking generals heading for a last stand at Berchtesgaden (Hitler's mountain retreat). Unfortunately we were delayed on the ground with engine trouble and when we took off Control vectored us to Hamburg instead. The reports proved well founded and one of 488 Squadron's aircraft managed to 'bag' a Junkers Ju 52 transport heading for Austria in the early morning.

Towards the end of April the order came for 488 (NZ) Squadron to be disbanded. Our aircraft were grounded and we were sent back to the U.K. on a tank landing craft. But not before we had stuffed our bedrolls with captured champagne now surplus to the requirements of our closed-down Mess. Of all the New Zealand manned fighter squadrons, 488 ranked second behind 486 in terms of aerial victories; quite an achievement for a nightfighter squadron.

It is difficult to describe the mood of the aircrew. It was so good to think that the war was over, that our side had won and that we were survivors."

Post war, Allott Gabites toured parts of Germany before returning to civilian life and studying at the Architectural Association School in London. He and his wife Audrey are now retired and live in Paraparaumu, New Zealand. They have two sons, John and Christopher.

An English navigator/radar operator serving with 488 Squadron in 1945 was Flying Officer Noel Fellowes, here standing in front of a wrecked Dornier Do 217 nightfighter on a Dutch airfield. All who examined it were struck by the crudity of its manufacture. (A Gabites)



TEMPEST SQUADRON

This chapter is based on interviews with Flying Officer Ray Danzey DFC, who served with 486 (NZ) Squadron, plus additional material from aviation artist and researcher Ron Fulstow.

In a manner of speaking 486 Squadron was both the first and the second RAF Squadron privileged to receive the new Hawker Tempest Mk V. The first Tempests arrived on 14 January 1944, while the Squadron was based at RAF Tangmere, on the south coast of England. 485 had been continuously on operations for 16 months, as part of 11 Group Fighter Command. However in early February, before they had taken the new Tempests on operations, most were damaged when they flew into a flock of Plovers. They were soon told to hand the few undamaged Tempests over to No. 3 Squadron, which accordingly became the first unit to fly the Tempests in combat. Some squadron members felt the loss of the Tempests was punishment from higher authority following the Plover incident. More Tempests were received in April and 486 became the second RAF Squadron to become operational on the type.

Raymond Jack Danzey 1921 – 1998.

Ray Danzey had originally joined the RNZAF on 13 January 1941 and arrived in England via North America on 18 November 1941. He joined 486 Squadron in June 1943, at a time when it was flying a few missions over the Channel and France but not meeting much Luftwaffe opposition. This changed in October 1943 when the anti-V1 launch site campaign began. He served on through the Squadrons most arduous period of operations, until March 1945.

He eventually left the United Kingdom for home in August 1945 and returned to civilian life in New Zealand. Ray Danzey died on 9 November 1998 and is survived by his wife Jose and their children, Chris, Laura and Ruth.
(R Danzey)

PREPARING FOR D-DAY

Ray Danzey recalls, "The Squadron received a second batch of Tempests in April and moved to Newchurch in Kent. Then in May, 486 Squadron moved south to the Dungeness peninsula and took over two farm paddocks with a temporary steel mesh runway. This was to familiarise us with temporary landing grounds in anticipation of moving to France soon after D-Day. We put up tents to live in like other Squadrons intended to be part of a mobile Wing in France.

We completed a number of sorties over the Normandy beachhead on D-Day and those following. Then the first V1 flying bombs struck England at 4.30AM on 13 June 1944 and the Squadron's mission was changed to meet this new threat. The V1s flying overhead that night got us all out of bed and sounded like two-stroke motorbikes flying overhead, it was a weird engine noise. We thought we should attack these things and so we did."

THE ANTI-V1 CAMPAIGN

"The Squadron was divided into two enlarged flights with each half on alert for a 24 hour period from 10AM to 10AM the next day. Each flight had alternate rest days. The easiest time to attack V1s was in the early pre-dawn light at 4-4.30AM. I destroyed 11 V1s altogether, but only two were in full daylight. The V1s power unit created a bright exhaust trail in the sky which was easily seen, whereas to see the little 'sods' in daylight was very difficult because they only had a 16 ft wing span and travelled at 380 mph. The Tempest had a top speed of 440-450 mph and our tactic was to dive on the V1s to catch them, before they entered the area of the balloon barrage a few miles inland.

A system was instituted whereby we interacted closely with the Observer Corps. A call would come through from a coastal observation post reporting that one or more V1s were approaching the coast at say 2,000 ft. We would then patrol at 3,500 to 4,000 ft. There were enough observation posts along the coast so that as a V1 flew over the various observers, they would fire Very Lights (flares) as it passed overhead and we would follow this trail of Very Lights. This was a good simple system in daylight.

A lot of people talk about V1s being tipped over in flight – very few ever were. Of the eleven I was credited with, a few exploded in midair.

After shooting down the second one I landed back at Newchurch with one wing bare metal where the paint had been blasted cleanly off; while the fuselage was covered with a dirty coloured greasy stuff you could write in with your finger. This was the actual explosive from the bomb, called 'titinium' I think. Some people say, 'Oh but a V1 could not shoot back at you'. The interesting fact here is that we only lost two pilots to enemy action in the three years and two months before the V1 campaign, but three pilots killed and more injured in ten weeks against the V1s. The main cause of these casualties was not the V1s exploding, but trouble with the Tempest's Sabre engine. We had to push our engines very hard to catch the flying-bombs, after the coastal guns, but before the balloon barrage. I strayed into the balloons once because I just got carried away chasing a bomb a little too far. Fortunately I emerged unscathed by turning hard to starboard.

By the first week of August 1944 my period of flying against the V1s came to an end. Every Squadron was trying to get in on the act and at times I felt frustrated with five or even six other aircraft firing at one V1 from far astern with no real chance of hitting it. These pointless attacks were simply dangerous to any aircraft making a correct diving, high speed attack closer to the particular V1.

On 23 August, I crashed on takeoff (because of an engine malfunction) and then spent a month recovering in Warmington Hospital. When I rejoined the Squadron I found that I had never been taken off strength, even though I had been away for some weeks."

To Belgium

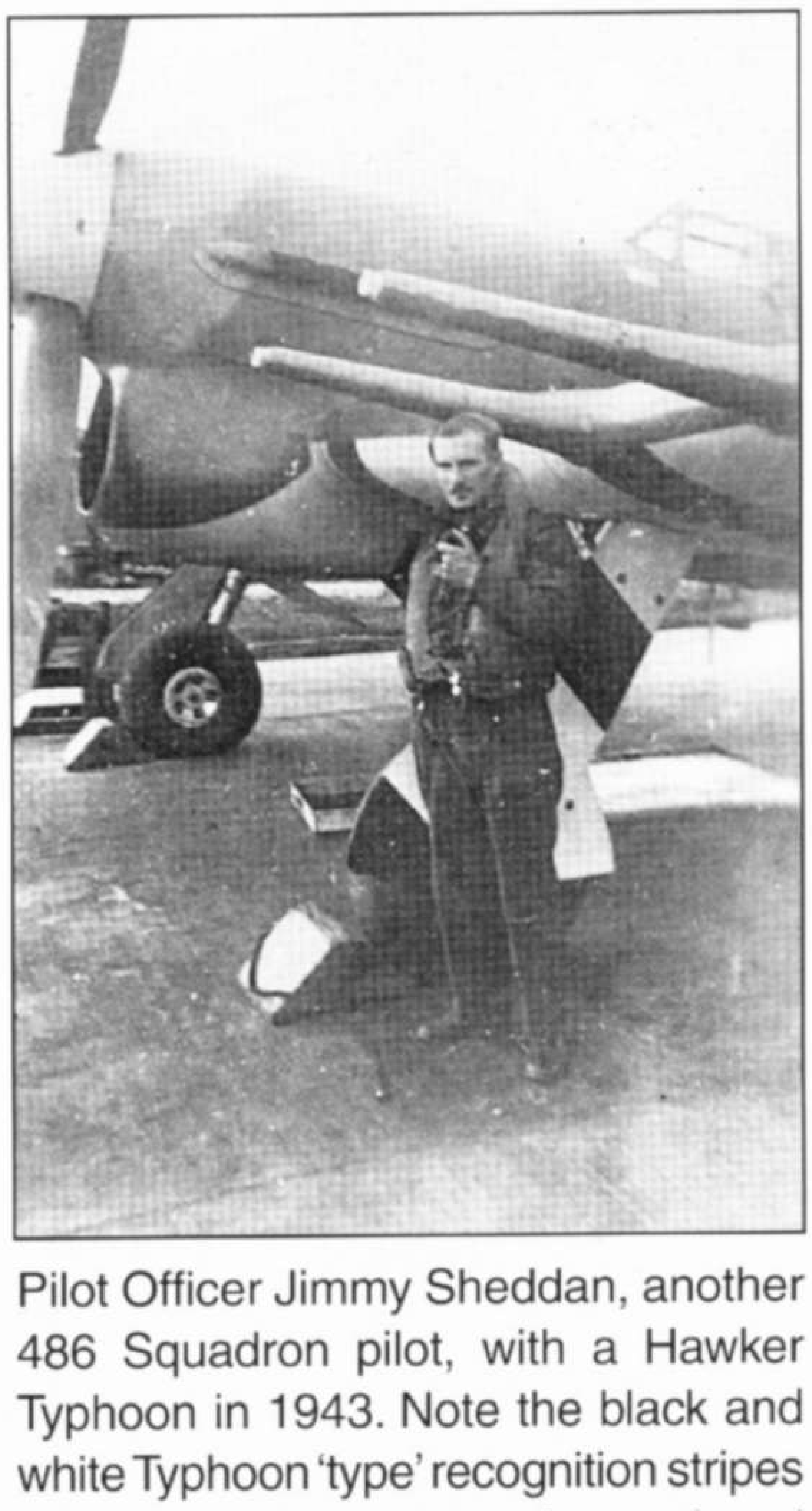
"On 29 August 1944, 486 Squadron moved to Grimbergen, Belgium and one of our missions from there was to help cover the Arnhem airborne operation. On 1 October, we flew forward again to the large, recently liberated airbase at Volkel, in the Netherlands. At one time, an advanced ground refuelling party on 10 to 12 men was sent north of Volkel. They travelled by road, through a narrow Allied controlled corridor to an advanced landing strip. From there they were to refuel our aircraft closer to the front lines. With Germans still in control either side of the road, they were never heard from again and were presumed killed.

At Volkel, together with 3 and 80 Squadrons we made up 122 Wing, all flying Tempest Mk Vs. The Wing's pilots took over part of a Benedictine Monastery for accommodation. The resident monks retained the third floor and the 125 pilots used the lower two. Each of us slept in a monks cubical with the bed consisting of a slate slab and two blankets. Later we were billeted in the village of Uden, near Volkel. That was in January 1945 and it was so cold the ground staff would pour fuel onto the runway and set fire to it, as a method of clearing ice. At that time pilots would take turns flying over to London about every four weeks, with one of the highlights being a visit to a Turkish bath near Admiralty Arch."

Train attacks

"Attacking trains was a risky business. An entry in my log book for 4 October 1944 records 'attacked two trains', but of course a pilot put the barest outline in his log book. When I add up the score for that one mission, the Squadron attacked several barges, 7 or 8 locomotives and numerous open-topped and closed goods wagons. We *never* strafed passenger carriages, *never*.

Flying Officer Ray Danzey climbing out of a Hawker Typhoon at Tangmere, 1943. (R Danzey)



Pilot Officer Jimmy Sheddan, another 486 Squadron pilot, with a Hawker Typhoon in 1943. Note the black and white Typhoon 'type' recognition stripes under the wings, not to be confused with the later 'Invasion' stripes. The white stripes are 24" wide and the black 12".

Like other RAF Squadrons, 486 suffered serious problems with the Typhoon, such as tails breaking off in dives and carbon dioxide seeping into the cockpit from the Napier Sabre engine. (R Danzey)

We attacked trains in a shallow dive from 2-300 feet and 'hopped' over the locomotive. If your dive was too steep you would have to pull up early. On one occasion (after shooting up an engine) I recall looking over my shoulder to see the passengers crouched beside their carriages. After each mission the squadron Intelligence Officer and Clerk would debrief each pilot and write up extensive notes on the operation."

TOP COVER – 27 DECEMBER 1944

Seven Tempest Mk Vs of 486 Squadron engaged 60+ Fw 190Ds of III/JG54 (The Third Gruppe of Jagdgeschwader 54) over the Münster area on 27 December 1944. It was the first combat experience for most of the German pilots, as III/JG 54 had been rebuilding and training new pilots after almost being wiped out in the air battles over France in the Summer of 1944. In the space on 5-7 minutes 10% of the Gruppen aircraft were destroyed for one Tempest shot down.

III/JG 54's mission that day was to act as landing cover for the Arado Ar 234 jets of 9./KG 76 (The Ninth Staffel of Kampfgeschwader 76) as they returned to Münster-Handorf from a bombing mission in the Ardennes[1]. The Gruppe's four Staffel (9. 10. 11. and 12. plus their leader Gruppen-kommandeur Hptm. Weiss and his Staff Flight) assembled themselves in a formation stepped from 6,000 ft to 10,000 ft. 10. Staffel were the highest and were led by the experienced fighter pilot, Leutnant Peter Crump. The Gruppe was on station patrolling near Münster when the 486 Squadron formation sighted them 'down-sun'.

Flight Lieutenant Keith G 'Hyphen' Taylor-Cannon was leading seven 486 Squadron Tempests on an armed reconnaissance patrol over the Paderborn area of Germany, near the Dutch border. They were approaching Münster, when he sighted part of the German formation [15+ fighters two thousand feet higher than themselves, according to the Squadron Operations Record. At the same altitude as 486 according

486 Squadron pilots during the V1 campaign when they were based at Newchurch, on Romney Marsh, August 1944.

From the left, standing on ground are: the two Squadron Doctors, Flight Lieutenant James R Cullen, Flight Lieutenant Vaughan St.C Cooke, Flying Officer James G Wilson, Flying Officer Robert D Bremner, Flying Officer Bevan M Hall, Squadron Leader James H Iremonger, Flying Officer William A Hart, Flying Officer Raymond J Danzey, Flight Lieutenant Eric W Tanner, Flight Lieutenant Harvey N Sweetman. Seated on wing: Flight Sergeant James W Waddell (killed in action 17 August 1944), Warrant Officer Harold K Williams (killed in action over Holland, 14 March 1945), Flying Officer Raymond J Gammock (killed in action over Holland, 6 October 1944). Top row: Flying Officer Owen D Eagleson, Unidentified, Flying Officer Henry M Mason, Flying Officer William A L Trott, Flying Officer Frank B Lawless, Flight Lieutenant James H McCaw, Flight Lieutenant John H Stafford, Flight Lieutenant Lloyd J Appleton and Flying Officer John Steedman. (R Danzey)

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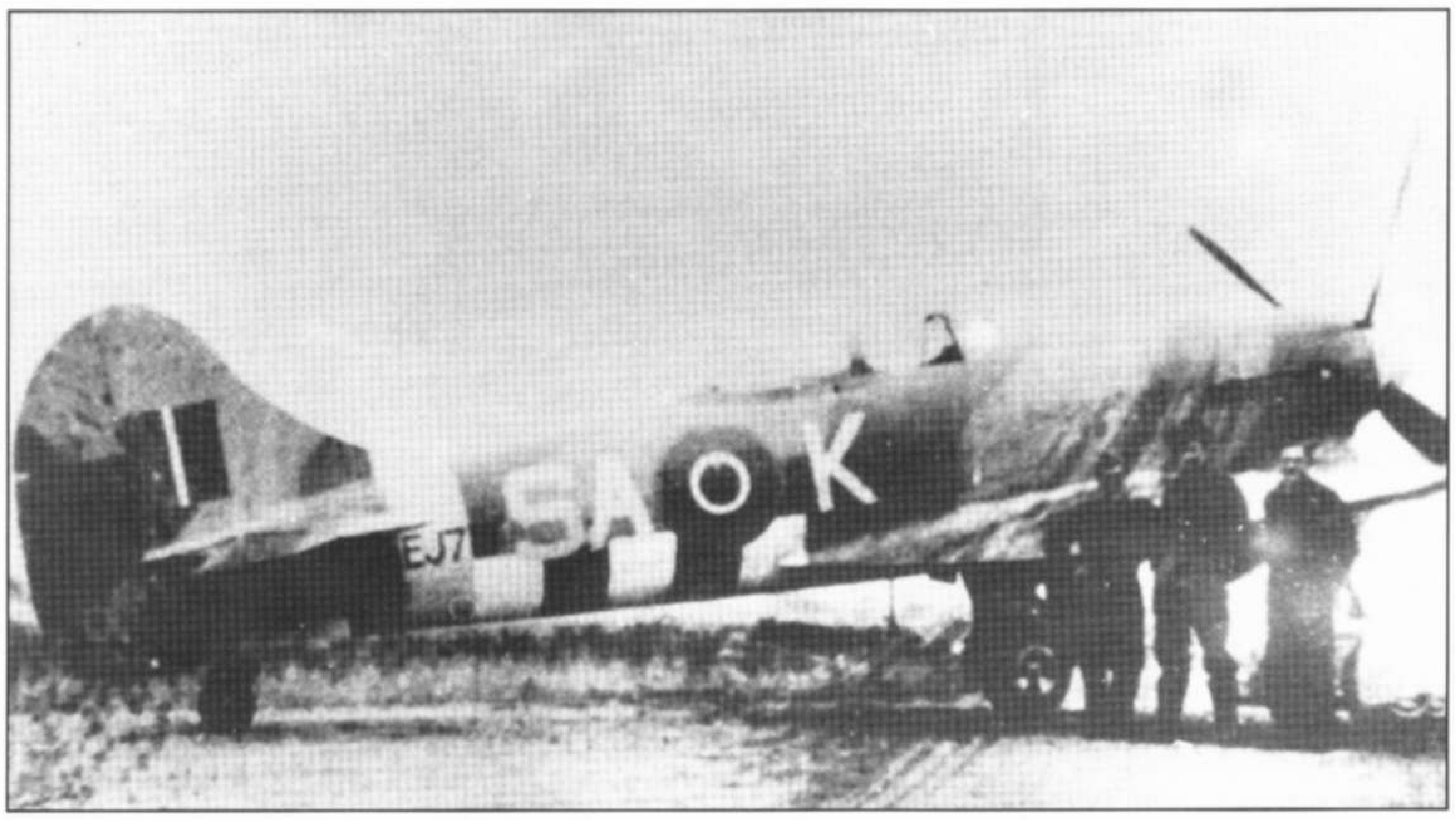
[1] Urbanke, Page 80

to Jack Stafford]. In a split-second Taylor-Cannon ordered his own 'Red' Section comprising himself, Pilot Officer Sid Short, Flying Officer Keith Smith and Flight Lieutenant Rick Tanner to full power and sped in to attack this Group of German fighters. In another instant, [Crumps] Schwarm were sighted and Taylor-Cannon ordered Ray Danzey's 'Green' Section to engage them. Danzey's section included his No. 2, Bevan Hall and Jack Stafford. 'Green' section climbed to engage Crump's Schwarm (his flight of four fighters) who dived into the midst of the three Tempests.



Another Tempest Mk V flown by Flying Officer Ray Danzey, EJ7??, also coded 'SA-K'. This photograph was taken in October 1944 at Volkel, before this Tempest was passed to No. 3 Squadron and re-coded 'JF-R'.

"The Tempest was a magnificent aircraft below 10-12,000 ft and we had great confidence in it." Commented Ray Danzey. (Volkel Aviation Museum via R Danzey)

In common with other Tempest Squadrons 486 would commence an operation with eight aircraft plus a 'spare'. If none of the eight aborted the spare should have returned to Volkel. On this occasion 'Green 4' had also aborted, resulting in a formation of seven.

In the initial clash 'Red' section appear to have successfully 'bounced' straggling elements of 10. Staffel and then, after a short period the fight bought them back together with 'Green' section who had been engaged by Peter Crump's Schwarm. Aircraft of 12. Staffel were drawn in as the dogfight lost altitude.

The 486 Squadron pilots believed they were fighting a mixed group of Fw 190s and Bf 109s, however (*almost* certainly) all were Fw 190Ds of III/JG54. *For the sake of readability the author has altered the 109s spoken about in the following transcription to Fw 190Ds.*

JACK STAFFORD RECALLS

"As we climbed at this large force of German fighters, most of them dived past us and kept going down [and engaged Red Section]."

Stafford lost sight of Ray Danzey and found himself in the same piece of sky as Bevan Hall. The two were quickly separated in the developing dogfight with Crump's Schwarm.

"I was turning and crossed in front of a 190 when another 190 passed with a Tempest behind it [Hall] and another 190 [Crump] behind him, and shooting[1]. I took a shot at the second 190, which broke away and as I turned [Crump] fastened on to my tail and was shooting. I pulled into a steep turn and kept a little top rudder on to maintain height, but [Crump] kept his position. I could see the pilot through his windshield but he couldn't gain any deflection on me. He kept pulling a little tighter and firing and I could see his aircraft shuddering with the recoil [of his guns] and almost stalling. Suddenly my windshield was covered with glycol. I thought I had been hit, but it was my engine overheating from the long period of turning at stalling speed. During this time Bev Hall tried to help me by moving in and taking a shot at [Crump] but was quickly engaged by another Fw 190. A short time later [Crump] broke off and disappeared below [Crump had seen the glycol streaming from Stafford's aircraft and believed he had hit Stafford's Tempest]."

At this point [within a minute or two[2]], "Bev Hall called over the radio, but he must have been mortally wounded because he was totally incoherent."

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1. Urbanke, Page 80, reports that *Leutnant* Crump shot down this Tempest and the pilot bailed out, however in the course of events reported by Flying Officer Stafford, Bevan Hall had not been shot down at that point.

   German losses listed for the day included one Fw 190 from 12. Staffel and three from Crumps own 10. Staffel; 9. Staffel, 11. Staffel and Hptm. Weiss' staff flight did not participate in the battle - Urbanke, P82, reports neither 9. or 10. Staffel *participated* in the fight which is probably just a proof reading error. In correspondence to several 486 Squadron pilots post war, *Leutnant* Crump notes that he was the only member of his Staffel to fire his guns, but four of his pilots were shot down. They *participated*, at least from that perspective.
2. Caldwell, Page 398.

Stafford reported his critical situation to his leader, Flight Lieutenant Taylor-Cannon, and was instructed to try to rejoin the Squadron which was reassembling towards Münster. In view of the fact that Stafford was alone and being pursued by several Fw 190s he replied to Taylor-Cannon that there was no chance of that! "I felt that the [German] pilot engaged with me had heard one of his pilots asking for help and he left me to assist. This was probably the pilot that killed Bev Hall as we two were the only Tempests still engaged at that time." Jack Stafford dived and used his Tempests superior speed to make his way home independently.

All four pilots flying as 'Red' Section were credited with one enemy fighter destroyed and Bev Hall was officially credited with a damaged. However, recent research by Ron Fulstow indicates that Sid Shorts victim is more likely to have fallen to Flying Officer Hall's guns. Short had been heavily engaged in the fight though, and his Tempest was commented on back at Volkel as being 'like a sieve'.

In this fight, both the 486 Squadron and III/JG54 pilots felt their opponents held the upper hand. Both overestimated the number of enemy aircraft engaged, as although III/JG54 had 60+ aircraft in the air, half of them were virtually unaware of the battle unfolding nearby[1]. One Ar 234 pilot reported seeing 200 enemy fighters[1] approaching! The New Zealanders success seems to be due to seeing their opponents *seconds* earlier, and their superior training and experience.

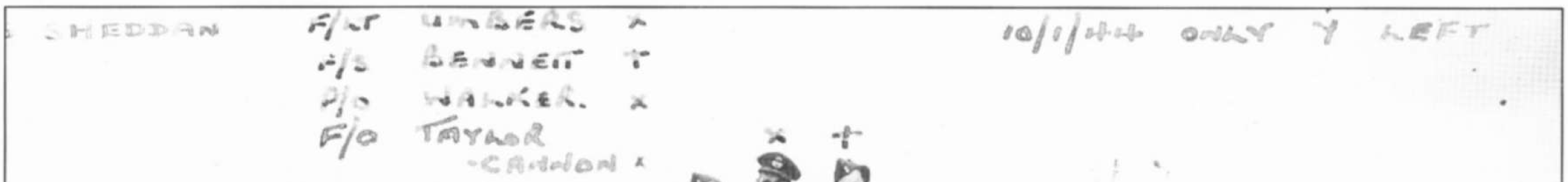
Ray Danzey had broken out of the dogfight before Stafford and dived at full power to escape. "The Germans above attacked both Jack and I and we were both closely engaged. I wriggled about and eventually broke free. We made our way independently back to Volkel, which was only 18 miles from the Dutch-German border. My pursuers turned back into German air space at the border."

After the initial engagement with Crump's Schwarm, Danzey and Stafford never saw each other till they were close to Volkel.

The North Island pilots on 486 Squadron in August 1943. *Only eight had not been killed or captured by late January 1945.*

From the left, sitting on the Typhoon: Pilot Officer John Powell, Flying Officer Nolan Faircloth, Pilot Officer Roderick Fitzgibbon, Flying Officer Robert 'Bluey' Dall, Pilot Officer James Froggat, Flight Lieutenant James Cullen, Flight Lieutenant Frank Murphy, Flight Sergeant 'Rangi' Swinton, Tait, Pilot Officer Kevin McCarthy, the Squadron Doctor, Pilot Officer Norman Preston, Flight Lieutenant Lloyd 'Hap' Appleton, Flying Officer Ray Danzey, unknown and armourer Len Parks.

Standing left to right: Pilot Officer Arthur Sames, Pilot Officer Murray Jorgensen, an English Intelligence Officer, Pilot Officer Wallis Tyreman, the Station Commander, 'Paddy' Gresham, Squadron Leader (later Group Captain) Desmond Scott, Squadron Leader Ian Waddy, Flight Lieutenant Allan H Smith, Flying Officer James G 'Wo' Wilson, Flight Sergeant Howard Saward and Flight Sergeant Brian Thompson. (R Danzey)



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[1] Urbanke, Page 81.

"Fifty years after the event Jack Stafford pointed out to me that on the run for home an Arado Ar 234 flew beneath me at right angles. [the Squadron had also sighted Ar 234s the previous day] I took a look behind at my pursuers and dare not fire, as firing the Tempests four 20mm cannons reduced its speed by 30 mph, such was the recoil effect."

Flight Lieutenant Arthur I 'Tubby' Ross sitting in the cockpit of Squadron Leader C J 'Jimmy' Sheddan's Hawker Tempest Mk V, 'SA-M', serial SN129. Sheddan was promoted to command 486 Squadron from 2 May 1945 when Warren Schrader left to lead 616 Squadron, flying Gloster Meteor Mk III jet fighters. (T Neilsen)

JANUARY 1945

"By January 1945 my operational tour had expired. I had been on the Squadron for 18 months and because of a shortage of replacement pilots, had to continue on.

On 13 January we were asked to patrol over the American lines of what became known as the 'Battle of the Bulge'. On that day the American 9th AF was still grounded due to poor weather, but we with our Tempests, flew. At about 500 ft over the American positions intense flak suddenly opened up. Of the eight pilots on the patrol, Squadron Leader Spike Umbers and Flying Officer William 'Wacky' Kalka were shot down, fortunately neither was killed. Flight Lieutenant Lloyd 'Hap' Appleton was severely injured with shrapnel[1] in the face. Flight Lieutenants Fenton and Evans and Flying Officer Short's aircraft were damaged 'Category B', which meant they could not be repaired at our base. Flying Officer O'Connor and I escaped unscathed - *again*. I was never hit at any stage in the war, by flak or enemy aircraft, quite incredible! I was the first to land and Colin McDonald, who was not flying that day, greeted me back at base. Many years later when we met again he told me that my first words to him on landing were, 'I think I'm the only one!'.

A tour was normally 18 months or 200 hours, whichever came first. Part of the reason why tour expired pilots, such as myself, had to continue on, was that on D-Day there were virtually no pilot casualties and so the impression was that the Luftwaffe was close to beaten. Therefore the Empire Air Training Scheme was wound down, in the belief that new pilots would not be required in Europe. However as soon as we began to operate in force over Germany itself, all hell broke loose again and we were short of pilots six months later. The squadron was reduced to 14 pilots in January 1945 – our full compliment would have been 26.

Even though I was getting through unhit, the thought was with me that I couldn't go on enjoying this charmed life. We just could not get replacements and in the end I felt my nerves were shattered. Group Captain Pat Jameson, who was the Officer Commanding -Volkel, came to me one night and said 'Danz, you've finished.' He did not even consult the Wing Commander (Flying). Thinking back now, my nerves had gone; it must have been obvious to an experienced man like him. Twenty three pilots had been killed in the 21 months I was on the Squadron, and it got to the stage where my thoughts were that I 'knew' that on the next trip I *must* die, because the laws of probability had been exhausted months before." Ray Danzey was posted back to England in March 1945.

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[1] Shrapnel is named after the British General Shrapnel (died 1842), who invented the hollow projectile.

COMBATING THE V2

In December 1944 No. 451 (RAAF) Squadron, under Squadron Leader G Small, DFC & Bar, returned to England from the Mediterranean and joined 11 Group. Based at the Battle of Britain grass airfield, Hawkinge, Kent, they gained a new leader in the form of Squadron Leader Colin Robertson, DFC – back for his second tour with 451. The Squadron was re-equipped with Spitfire Mk XVIs which the pilots never really liked, because they found their Packard Merlin engines sometimes oiled up and there were a number of forced landings. The problem was probably due to British fuel and was ameliorated by using 'hotter' sparkplugs. The Squadron flew some bomber escort missions in support of the armies fighting the 'Battle of the Bulge', and was then withdrawn to train in dive bombing techniques, with the intention that it would be attacking V2 launch sites in Holland. The Squadron moved to Manston, Kent which had the longest, widest runway in the United Kingdom at that time. It was close to the English Channel and built to give crews of crippled bombers returning from operations over Europe, the best chance of surviving an emergency landing. Manston's fire tenders and ambulances were on the job most nights!

This chapter is based on a narrative from Warren Thomas (published in the 451 Squadron history 'Bankstown to Berlin', by Lenard L Barton) and interviews with Lindsay Richards, both members of 451 Squadron.

TRAINING

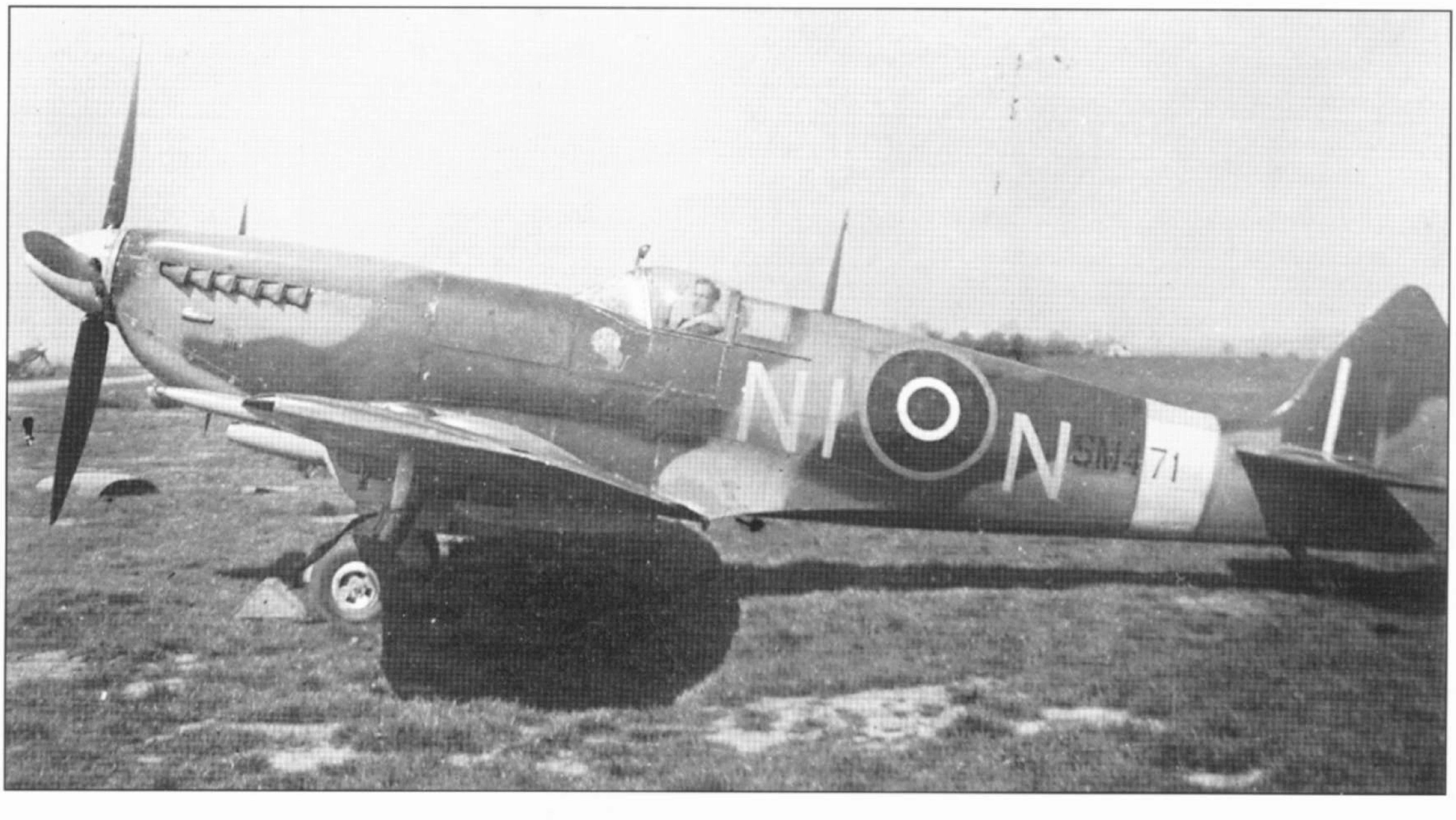
Warren Thomas recalls, "The main attraction of Manston, from our point of view, was the Goodwin Sands target range where we commenced training in dive bombing techniques with smoke bombs.

The Spitfires were fitted with bomb racks under the wings and belly and on operations we usually carried 2 x 250 pound bombs under the wings or 1 x 500 pound bomb under the belly, sometimes both. 1,000 pounds of bombs on a Spitfire was quite a load The belly bomb only had a clearance of 12 inches from the ground before take off and *nobody* ever brought one back! The method adopted for dive bombing was for a flight of four Spitfires to fly line astern at 6-8,000 feet and position

Flying Officer Lindsay Richards with a Spitfire Mk XIV at Wunstorf, December 1945. Note the dull *Night* spinner. From late 1944 onwards RAF fighters *Sky* spinners were generally repainted black to improve the camouflage effect on the ground.

Lindsay Richards is now retired and lives in Toowoomba, Queensland Australia with his wife Sonia. (L Richards)

A 451 Squadron Spitfire Mk XVI in England with Flying Officer Lindsay Richards in the cockpit. The squadron exchanged its Mk XVIs for Griffon engine FR Mk XIVs in September 1945. (L Richards)



the target to come up behind the trailing edge of the wing, then peel off one at a time, well spaced out, in an eighty degree dive i.e. almost vertical. One would position the target in the gun-sight and release the bombs at about 3,000 feet then pull up. By this time the aircraft had reached a speed of about 400 mph and squashed down another thousand feet. It was not uncommon to blackout for a second or two when 'G' Force came into play - it depended on one's fitness!"

PATROLS OVER HOLLAND

"The Squadron was then moved to Swannington in Norfolk and the purpose of our training became evident – to tackle the V2 rocket launching sites. We commenced operations over Holland, bombing V2 launch sites which were generally positioned near the coast and also on a racecourse in the Hague. On our very first mission, as we approached the Dutch coast, a V2 was launched. At 10,000 we watched it rise up in front of us, the metal glinting in the sun. It finally disappeared into the stratosphere and would have fallen on London some minutes later. The shock wave from the V2 hit our aircraft some seconds later and bounced us around. One was left with a feeling of awe to actually witness what was the beginning of the space age.

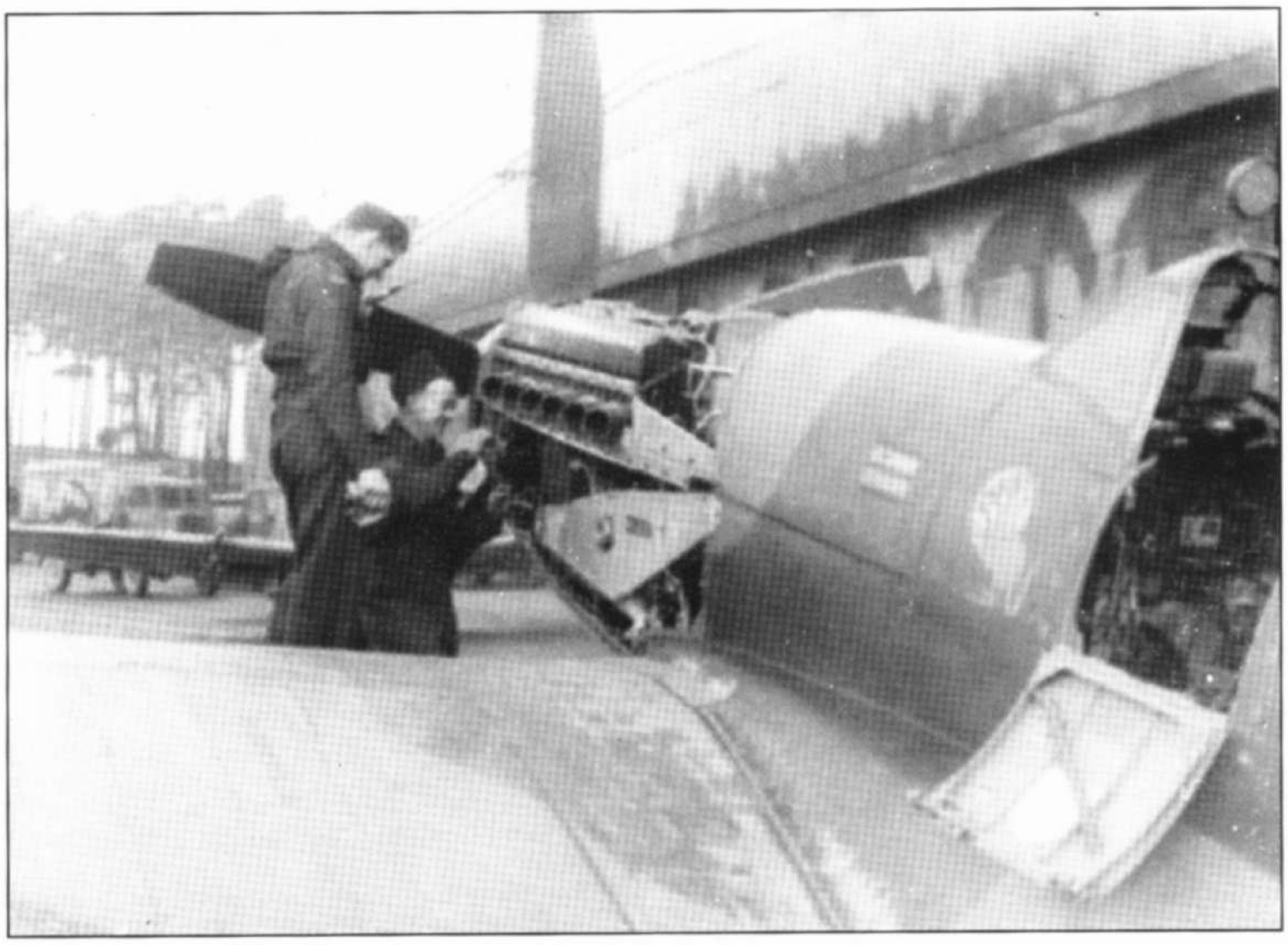
453 Squadron RAAF, flying from an English base, also participated in attacking the V2 sites.

One of the rewards of our operations was, that with continuous patrols from various squadrons from dawn till dusk, the V2's were released far less frequently on London. To do so revealed their launch site positions and invited our attack.

As the advancing Allied armies moved into Belgium we were able to do two operations a day, hitting a target in Holland and then landing on a forward airstrip in Belgium. We would re-arm and do a second bombing operation over Holland, then we would strafe selected targets before returning to base in England.

The German anti-aircraft fire was strong around the launching sites and particularly around the Hague racecourse. Once they worked out our attack plan they put up a carpet of flak at a height of about 6,000 feet. They knew we had to fly through it and relied on a pattern of fire to be effective. We

This camouflaged German 20mm flak gun is being inspected by members of 451 (RAAF) Squadron, post war in Germany. Lindsay Richards is sitting on the gunners seat in the lower photograph. (L Richards)



The nose of Spitfire Mk XIV NH919 flown by Squadron Leader Graham 'Porky' Falconer as leader of 451 Squadron with the Australian contingent of the Allied Occupation Forces in Germany, 1945. (L Richards)

lost one pilot, Flying Officer Les Blake on his first mission, but he bailed out and was taken prisoner. Flight Lieutenant Henry 'Doonk' Bray, DFC, was also lost about this time."

Flying Officer Lindsay Richards recalled an occasion when he was concentrating very hard on an attack. He found himself perspiring so heavily that he could dip his tongue into the pool of sweat which formed in the bottom of his oxygen mask.

"Fortunately the launching of V2 rockets (and our role) tapered off as the Germans were pushed out of Holland. This was just as well as the V2's had taken their toll on London, where whole blocks of buildings would disappear as a V2 landed without warning. I remember having a weekend leave in London during this time and thinking that I was much safer when I was over a V2 launching site in Holland.

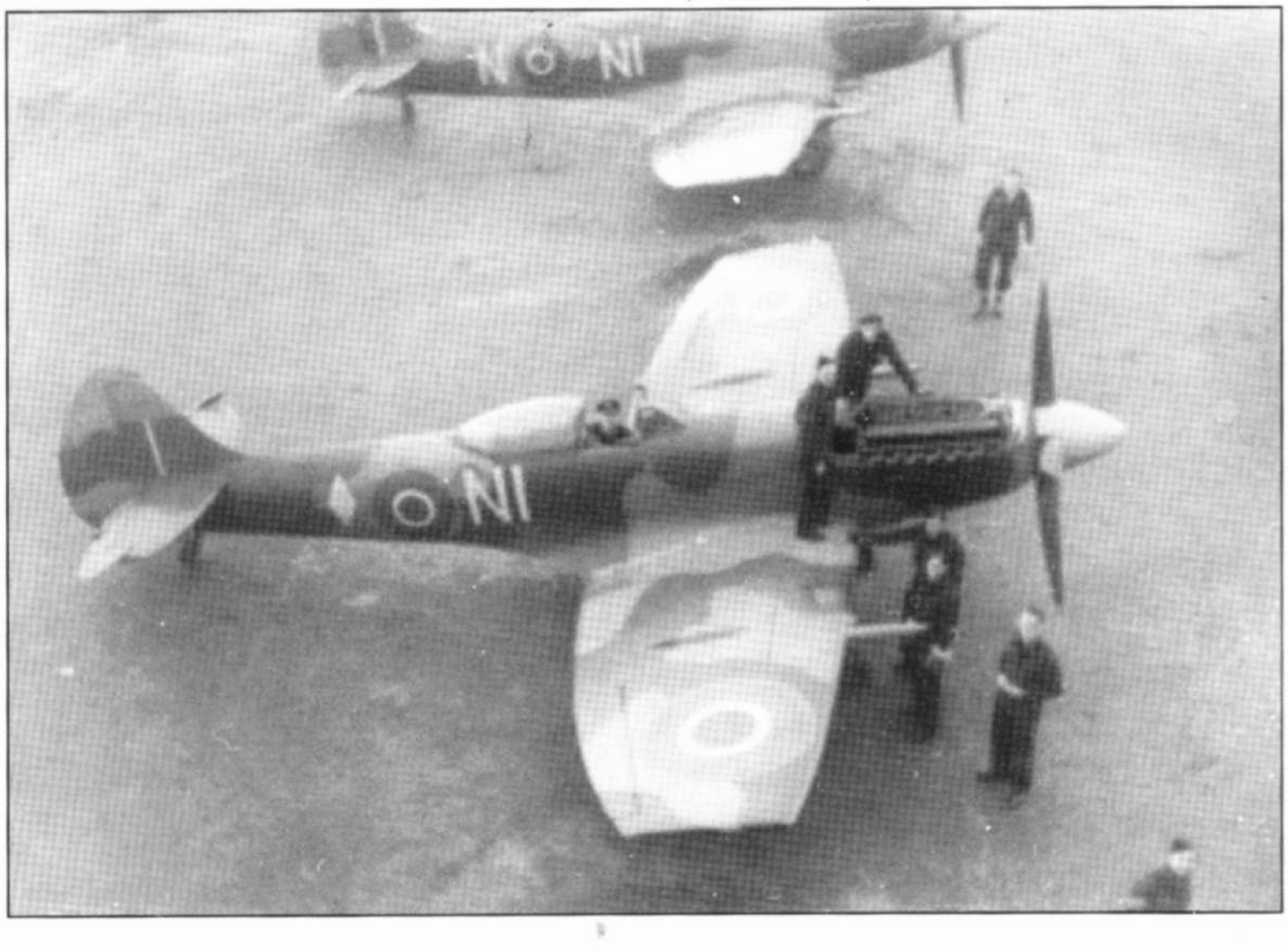
Another task was to bomb railway lines and bridges wherever they led to the launch sites. When we were successful it was sometimes disappointing to find that the next day the railway line had been repaired overnight."

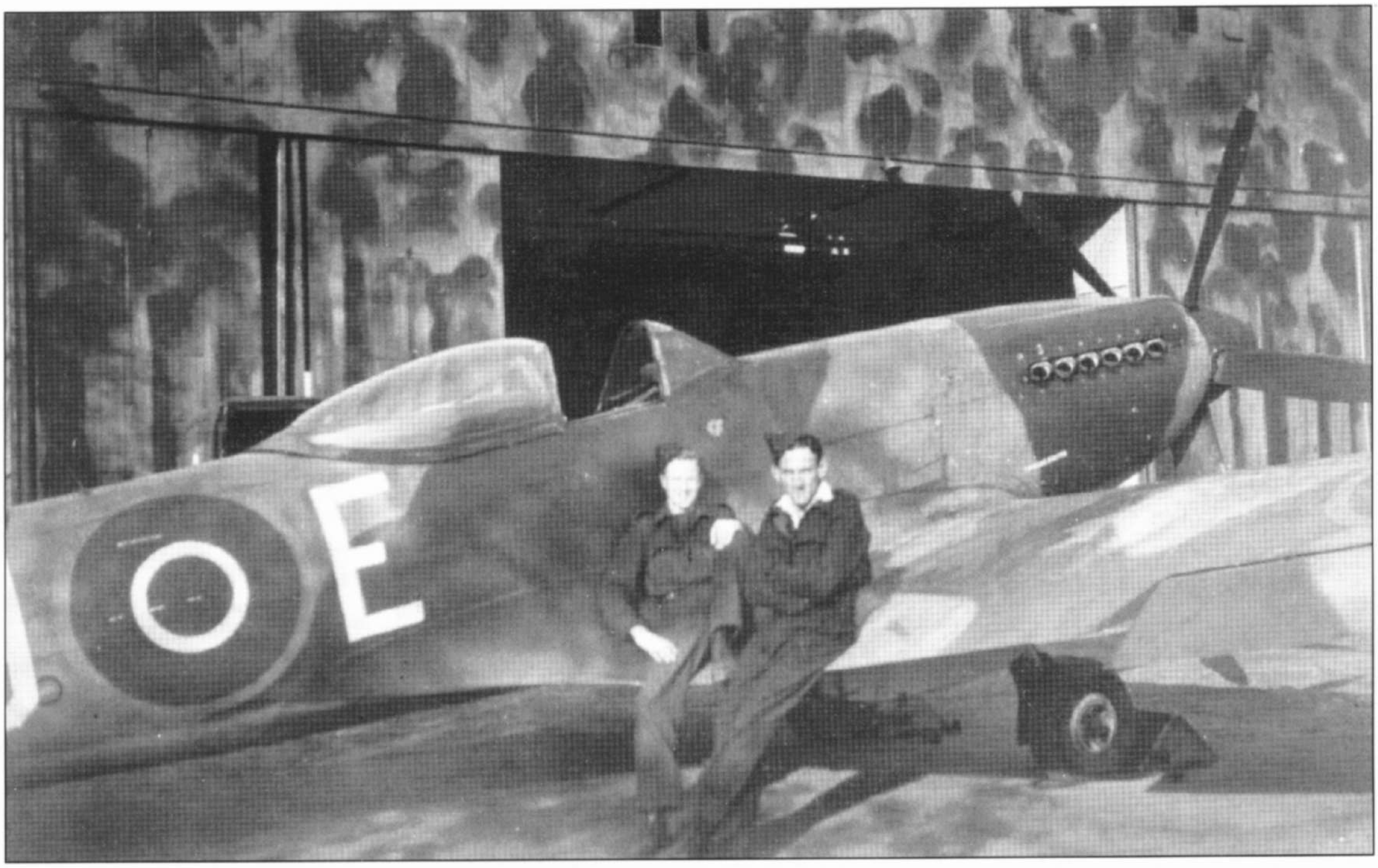
ESCORT DUTIES

"The Squadron next moved to Lympne in Kent, a prewar grass airfield that had been the starting point for the famous England to Australia air races. Nearby was the former home of Sir Phillip Sassoon, considered before the war to be one of the finest homes in Britain. With other Squadrons we were now using it as an Officers' Mess.

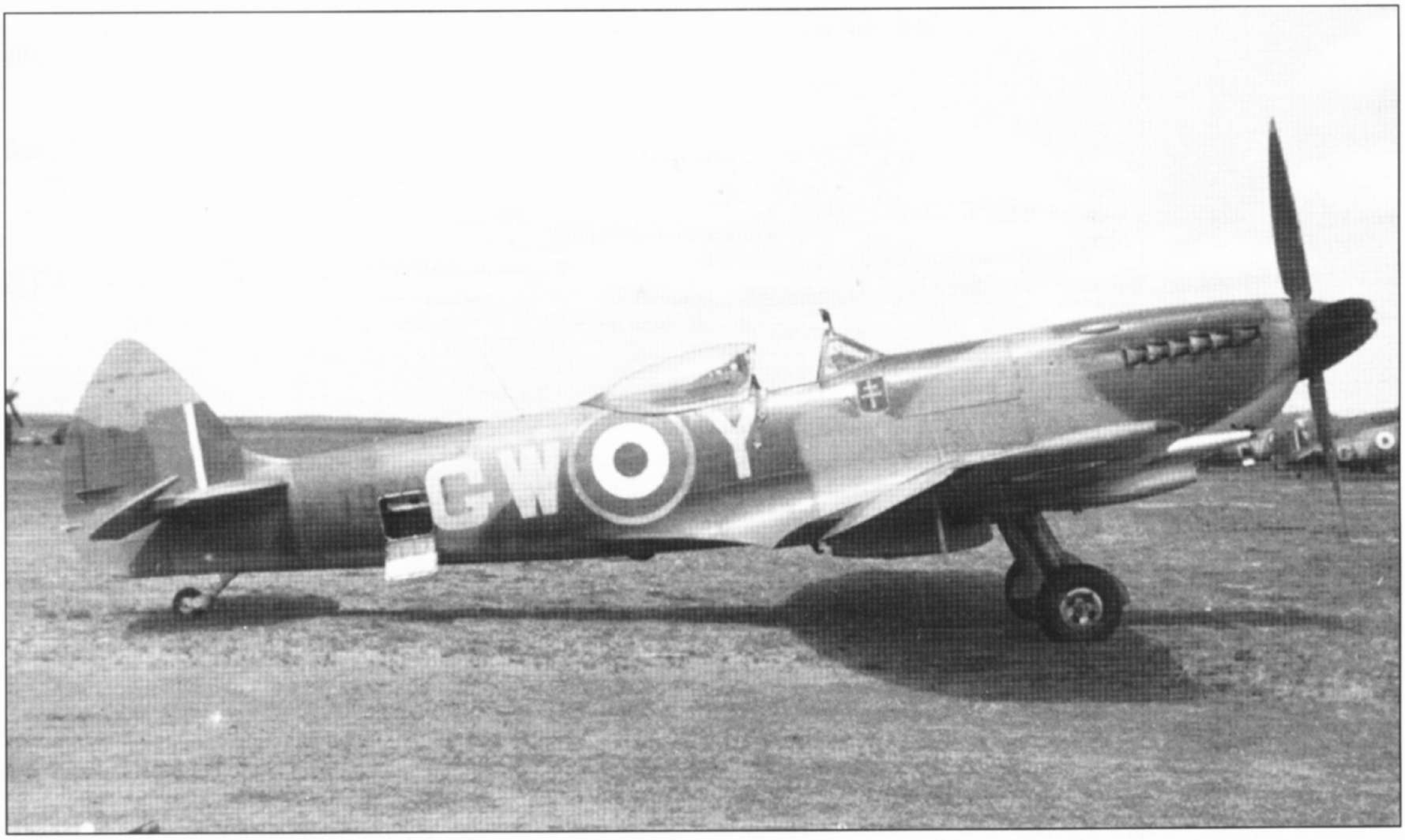
The Squadron went back on to bomber escort and because the Allies now had airfields in Holland we were able to escort them to their targets. On one raid to Bayreuth we flew forward to

An overall view Squadron Leader Falconer's Spitfire Mk XIV, Germany, 1945. He used a diamond as his personal code, rather than a letter. (L Richards)





A Spitfire FR Mk XIV of 451 Squadron at Wunstorf, Germany, 27 November 1945. The two ground crew members with the aircraft include Bob Castell on the right. Note the late war outline (in yellow) to the upper wing roundel. (via A Lamb)



Also part of the Occupation Force was Spitfire LF Mk XVI, TB702, belonging to Groupe de Chasse (GC) 4/2 "Ile de France" or 340 (French) Squadron in RAF terms. TB702 was photographed at Linge-Drope, Germany, April 1945. The designation GC 4/2 was used in French documents from January 1944. However the RAF still referred to the squadron as 340 Squadron until November 1945, when it was disestablished and all personnel transferred to the Armée de l'Air. The Squadron was part of the 145 (French) Wing. (Aero-Journal)

Squadron Leader Graham (Porky) Falconer, 451 Squadron's last Commanding Officer in Germany, 1945. (L Norton)

Eindhoven, Holland the day before and were able to rendezvous with the Avro Lancaster bombers and cover them right to the Czechoslovakian border. On this operation we encountered German Me 262's for the first time, which were so much faster than our Spitfires. We outnumbered the Luftwaffe jets and they made one pass at us then streaked away.

On another mission we again flew to Holland and stayed overnight. The next day we flew to Heligoland, a tiny island and German naval base in the North Sea. We patrolled above the target whilst a stream of one thousand bombers plastered the little island with their bombs. It was an awesome sight, the line of bombers stretching back to England while squadrons of fighters circling above. This was an impressive demonstration of total air supremacy.

'V.E. Day' arrived on 8 May, 1945 and on the 12th, 451 Squadron was selected, with others, to escort the British Navy to the Channel Islands. Here there was a landing of troops supported by battleships offshore and Britain regained the only piece of her territory surrendered to the Germans during the war. It was more ceremonial than anything else, but we were all pleased to be part of it. We again protected the Navy as the Squadron moved to Skaebrae in the Orkney Islands; one of the most northerly points of the United Kingdom and location of Scapa Flow, the Royal Navy's principle anchorage.

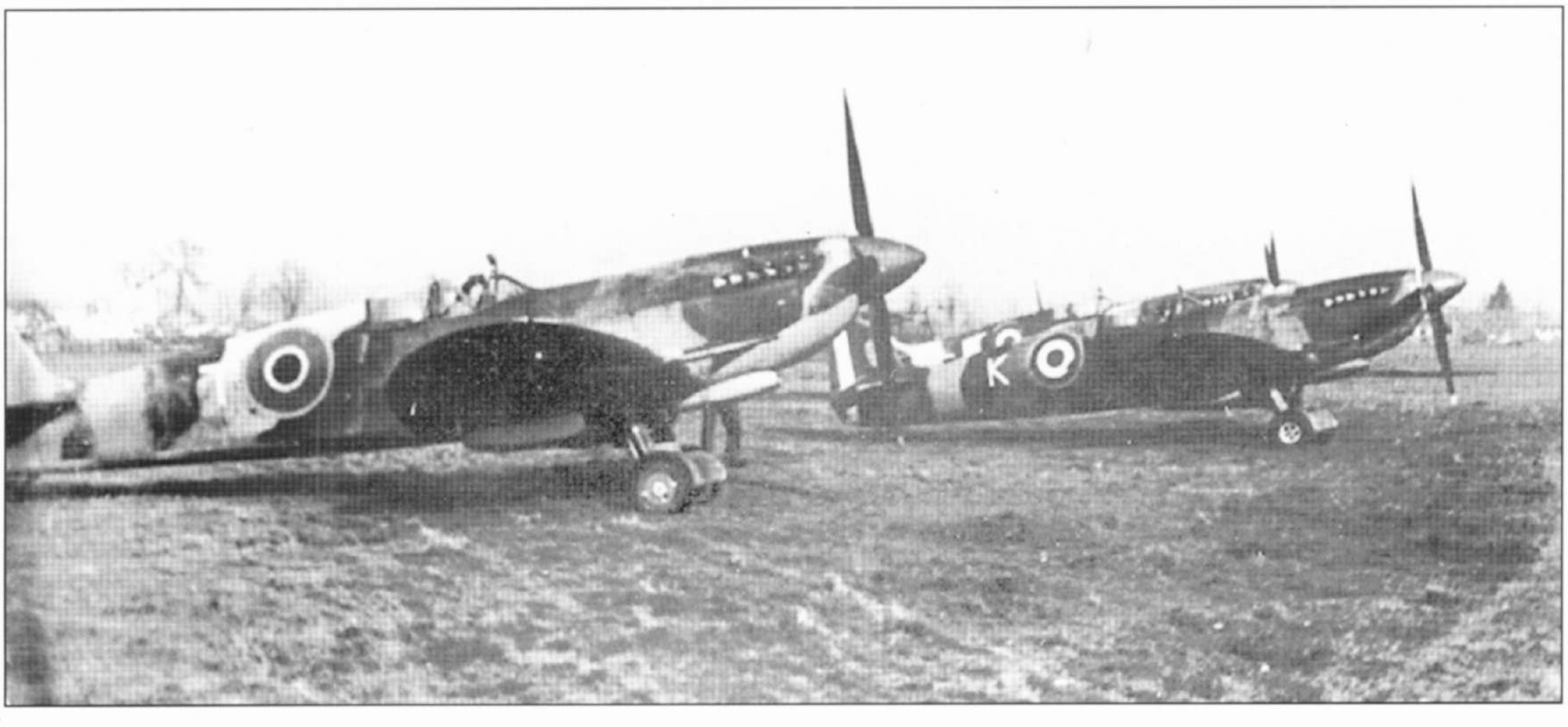
About this time many of the pilots who had been on the Squadron since the Desert Air Force days, were posted home to Australia. Among them were: Squadron Leader Colin Robertson, and F/Lt's R Sutton DFC, Croix de Guerre, M Kemp, DFC, Croix de Guerre, G Jones, T James, G Purdy, R Robert, R Milner, J Minahan, J Sidney, W Thomas and R Mercer. In July 1945, the Squadron returned to Lasham in Hampshire with a new batch of replacement pilots and with Squadron Leader Graham Falconer (RAAF) now in command."

GERMANY

"In September 1945, 451 Squadron was posted to Germany, with Spitfire FR Mk XIVs, to be part of the British component of the Allied Occupation Forces. There it operated as part of 84 Group RAF.

Our first base in Germany was Fassberg, a former Luftwaffe base near Hamburg, which was well planned with most comfortable quarters

More Occupation Force Spitfires were these of the l'armée de l'Air GC 2/7 at their German base of Friedrichshaffen in August 1945. During the war each Free French squadron in the RAF was named after a province of France, to honour and remember those people at home still living under German Occupation. Each flight within a squadron received the name of a city of this province. For example 'Ile de France' is the region of Paris and the two flights were 'Paris' and 'Versailles'. In some cases names from French colonial territories were also used. (SHAA)

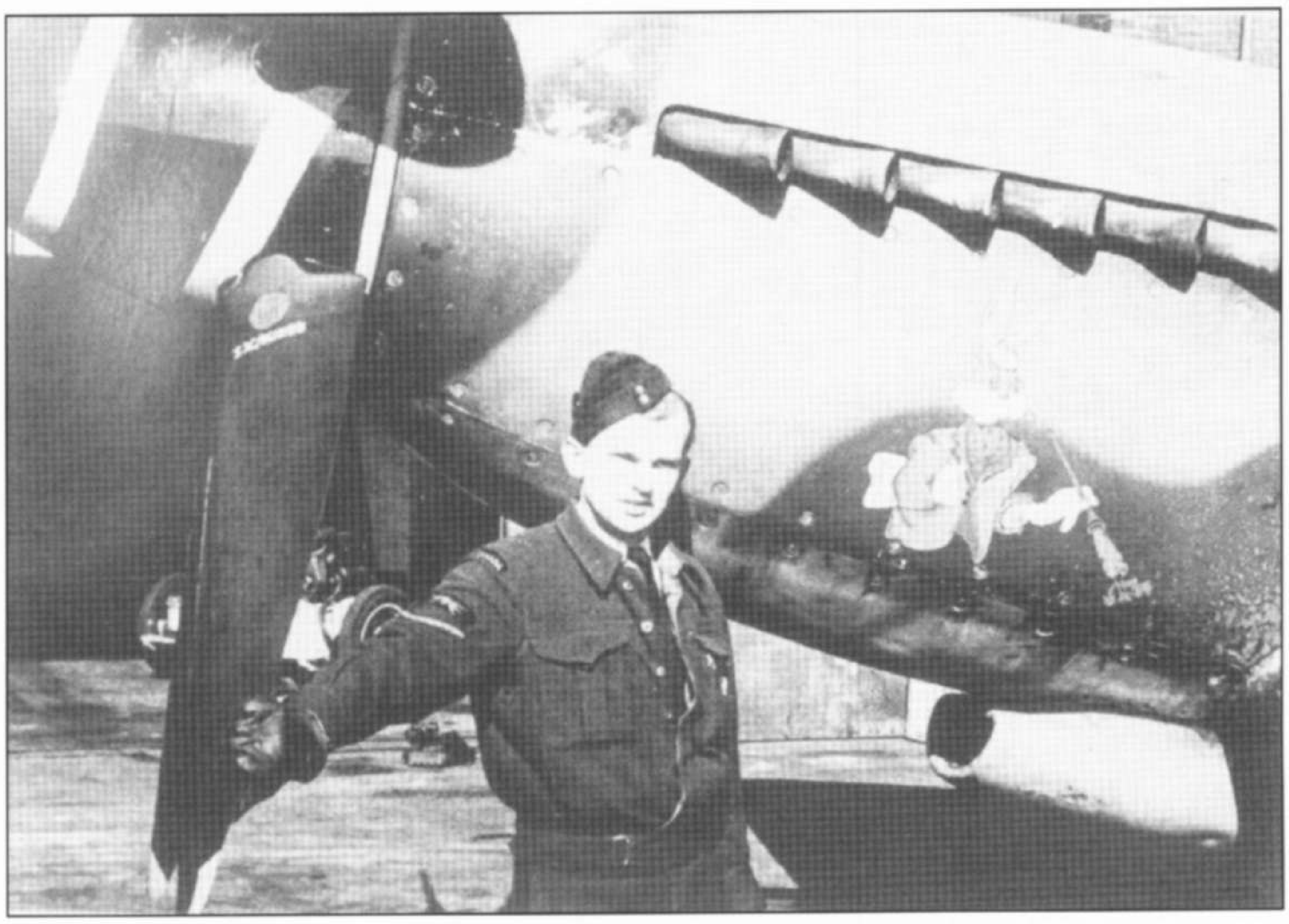


and amenities - even indoor bowling rinks. When we arrived, on 13 September 1945, a policy of no fraternisation with Germans was in force. We were not to associate with them in any way, other than to issue orders. The policy was enforced for about six months then progressively relaxed. At that time we did flying training on most days with air to ground gunnery practice on a nearby range.

The next move for the Squadron was on 5 October, to Wunstorf near Hanover, another Luftwaffe airfield. We were joined by a French Squadron whose Padre was a director of Lanson, the famous champagne vineyard in France. He arranged for a truckload of champagne to be brought over and it sold in the mess for about 10 marks a bottle!

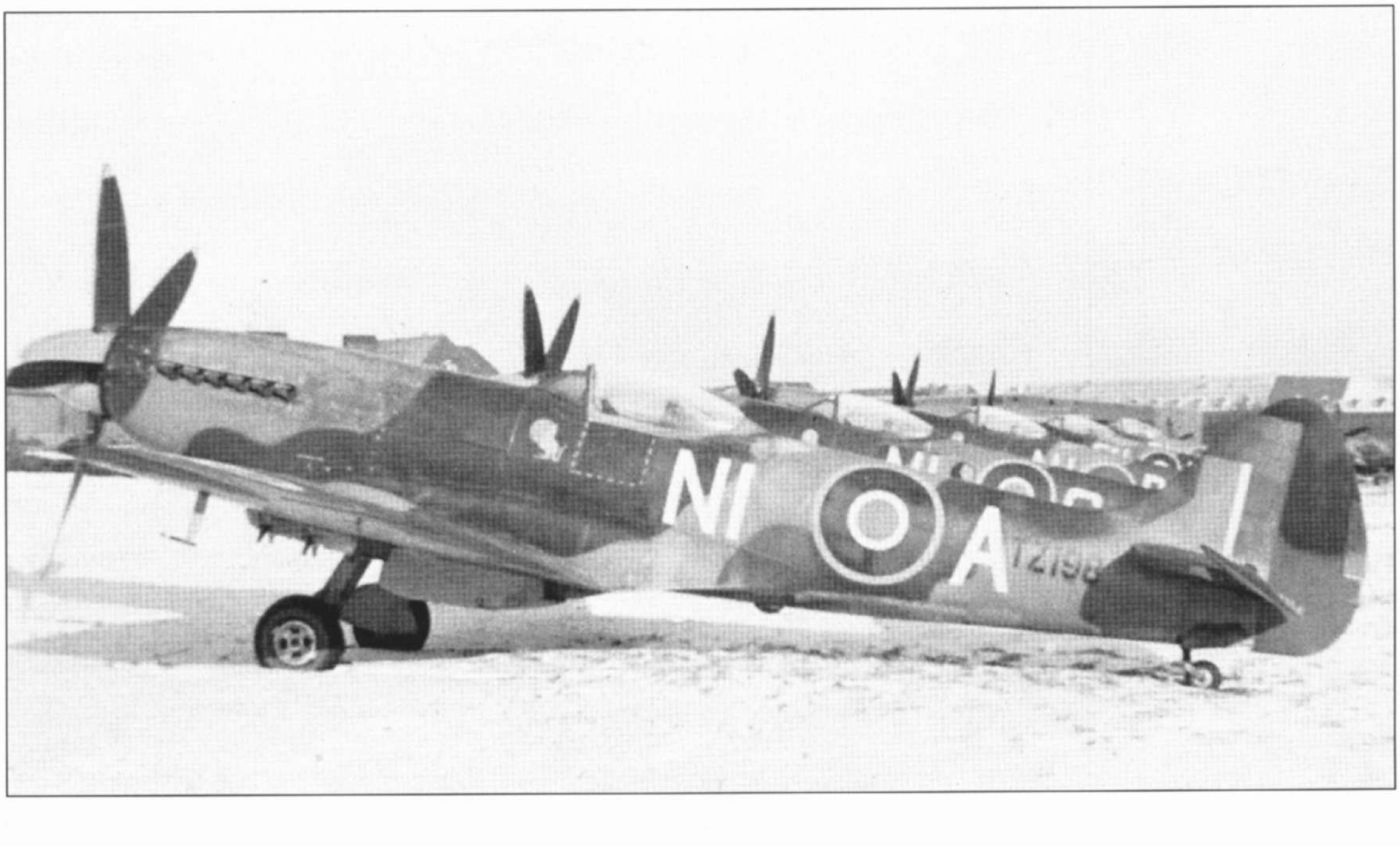
When the Squadron flew to its final home at Gatow airport in Berlin, I recall thinking that it was quite an achievement for 451 Squadron – from Sydney in 1941, to the Middle East and the campaigns with the Desert Air Force, including the Siege of Tobruk. Then on to Corsica, Italy, France, England and Germany to finish in Berlin!"

On 4 January 1946, the Squadron was advised by its 84 Group Headquarters that it was to be disestablished on 21 January, 1946. Like so many other formations created to fight the war, 451 (RAAF) Squadron took its place in history as a band of citizen soldiers who had answered the call to arms. The men returned home and their aircraft were distributed to other units of the Army of Occupation.



LAC Shymko by the nose of Spitfire Mk XIV '21-M' TZ198 of 443 (RCAF) Squadron. A colour illustration of this ex 451 (RAAF) Squadron aircraft appears on the back cover. The nose art depicts Bugs Bunny, wearing a beret, carrying a newspaper under his right arm and with a rather large cigarette holder in his left hand. (Shymko via Kuntson)

Spitfire FR Mk XIV, TZ198 wearing 451 Squadron codes 'NI-A'. It is shown here after being passed to 443 (RCAF) Squadron in January 1946, but before the Canadians applied their own squadron codes. (R Bracken)



FROM TEMPEST TO METEOR

Warren Schrader was initially rejected by the RNZAF on medical grounds, being told that he had a hole in the wall to his abdominal cavity. With this surgically repaired he subsequently spent many hours in a gym regaining his strength, before being accepted for flying training in March 1941. His first combat tour was with 1435 Squadron flying Spitfires in the Mediterranean and next he was posted to Egypt, on 10 June 1944, as a gunnery instructor.

"I did so much aerial gunnery as an instructor that I feel this was a major reason for my success in later combat tours back in England and Europe."

In February 1945 he converted to Hawker Typhoons and then Tempests and, on 7 March 1945, Squadron Leader Schrader was posted to 486 (NZ) Squadron, then in Holland. He arrived at the squadron as a supernumerary, the Officer Commanding being Squadron Leader Keith Taylor-Cannon. "Unfortunately Taylor-Cannon was shot down and killed, and so I took over the Squadron."

Wing Commander Warren Schrader, DFC and bar, with a Hawker Tempest, 1945.

He finished the War with a score of 12 enemy aircraft destroyed. Schrader had been the most successful RAF pilot in March-April 1945. This was one of the reasons for him being asked to take over 616 Squadron, with the objective of trying to achieve a Jet-versus-Jet victory in the last week of the war. (W Schrader)

A DAY AT THE OFFICE

"I must admit that I found ground attack a most enjoyable and shall we say a 'stimulating' experience; but it had its dangers and we suffered many casualties from the intense flak. Although we were engaged exclusively in ground strafing we were encountering a lot of German aircraft, and began to have a tremendous run of victories in the air. Typically we would be given a sector in which to perform 'Armed Recce', which was a rather silly name, it should have been 'Search and Destroy'. At this time we flew our Tempests in formations of eight. For a mission we would take off with nine aircraft, so that if one had to return to base with engine or some other problem the ninth would bring the formation back up to full strength. I was most impressed that the Germans kept flying even though they were heavily outnumbered by that stage. Our Squadron kept encountering numbers of German aircraft through April 1945 and in that thirty day period we destroyed 31 enemy aircraft.

On 15 April we encountered a formation of nine Fw 190's and succeeded in destroying eight and damaging the ninth, for the loss of one of our own, which had in fact suffered engine trouble. The pilot, Ralph Evans, baled out and was luckily picked up by a British army reconnaissance patrol, then also operating behind the lines. The 'spare' aircraft pilot had asked to stay with the formation and in agreeing to this I unwittingly evened up the numbers again [to eight].

Landing back at Fassberg after destroying a 109 in the Lubeck area early on the morning of 1 May, life was pretty good and I was planning a further sortie later in the day. A blight descended when I was told that Jamie, (Group Captain P G Jameson) wanted to see me immediately.

On the way to his office I wondered what sort of mischief my 486 pilots had been up to now. It couldn't be the wrecking of the Squadron Leader Administration's jeep again, could it? I had already received the rocket for that one! This time Jamie was his usual amiable self and informed me that from 1 May I was promoted to Wing Commander and was to immediately to take over No. 616 Squadron, flying Gloster

Another Squadron to operate Tempest Mk Vs in Holland was 33 Squadron. This photo of nosed over Tempest '5R-L' was taken at Predannack in early 1945. The Squadron moved to Gilze-Rijen in the Netherlands in February 1945[1]. (D Kain)

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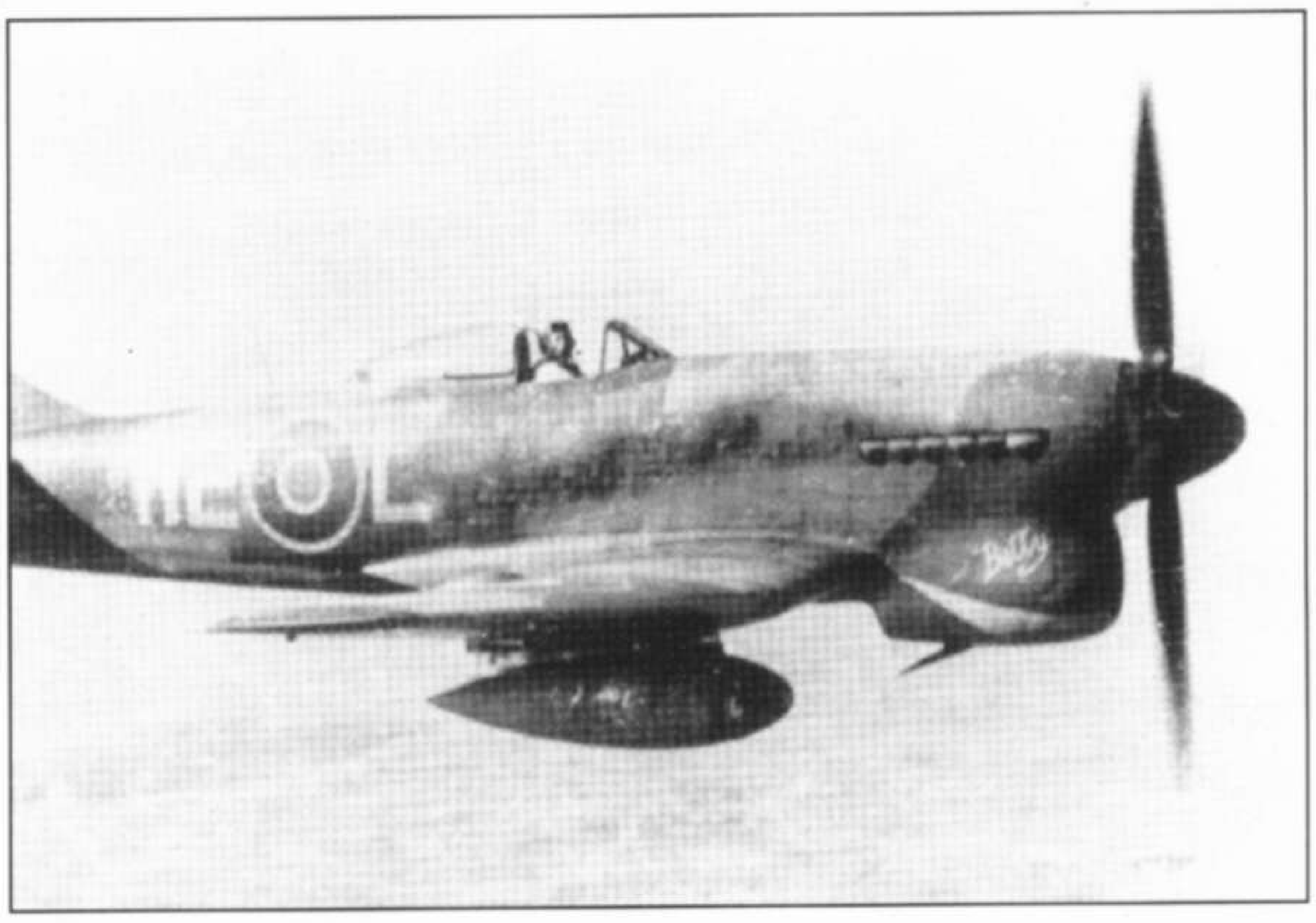
[1] Rawlins, 1993.



Hawker Tempest Mk V 'W2-L' named 'Betty' of 80 Sqn RAF. At Volkel, Nos. 3, 80 and 486 Squadrons formed 122 Wing, all flying Tempest Mk Vs. (T Neilsen)

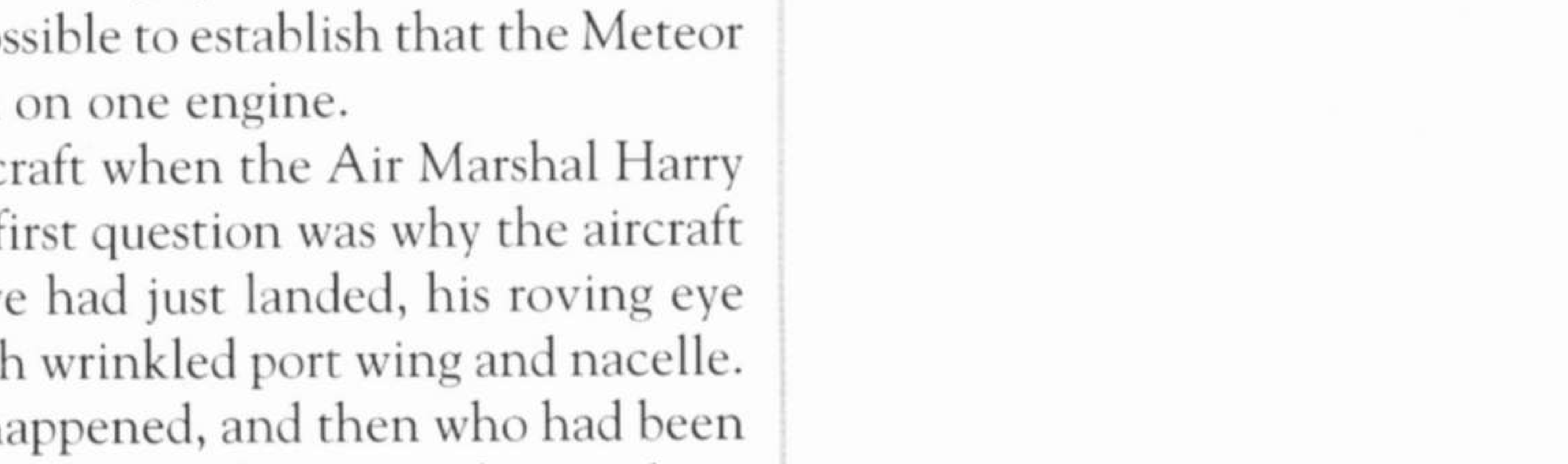
Meteor Mk IIIs, at Luneberg. This was somewhat of a surprise as I had never seen a jet aircraft and had only heard of these things flying around without props. Apparently there was an urgent desire by RAF 'Brass' for the Meteor to shoot down a German aircraft, preferably an Me 262, before the end of the war in Europe – time was obviously short. By the afternoon of 1 May I had been ferried to Luneberg and was doing thirty minutes dual on an Airspeed Oxford with my predecessor, on the grounds of my lack of multi-engine flying experience. As a conversion medium from Tempest to Meteor it was ridiculous. However early next morning, after a perfunctory cockpit familiarisation and a forty minute local flight [in Meteor 'YQ-R'], came my first operation flight [in Meteor 'YQ-F'] with one of the flight commanders as my No 2. We flew an armed recce in the Lubeck area, followed by a second [in 'YQ-E'] around Neumünster. Although we attacked ground transport, it was already apparent that the Meteor had insufficient range and duration to operate at low level where all the action was.

May 3rd was somewhat more eventful. On the first flight of the day [in 'YQ-H'], in heavy rain, my port wing and engine passed through the top of a tree and the ingestion of foliage proved too much for the engine, which died. At least it was possible to establish that the Meteor trimming out very nicely at 180mph on one engine.

We had barely got out of our aircraft when the Air Marshal Harry Broadhurst paid a surprise visit. His first question was why the aircraft were not flying. While being told we had just landed, his roving eye fastened on the damaged Meteor with wrinkled port wing and nacelle. Of course he wanted to know what happened, and then who had been flying it. Those hard eyes bored into mine for what seemed a very long time, then without comment he asked my plans for the rest of the day. On the second sortie that day [flying 'YQ-M'] we again found only ground targets. My aircraft was hit by light arms fire and damaged by debris from the ground. Because of its speed the Meteor had a bad habit of arriving over its target at the same time as bits and pieces of target debris reached their zenith. On the third sortie that day [in 'YQ-F' and with Flight Lieutenant A.G.P. Jennings as his No.2] an Me 109, He 111 and a Ju 87D were destroyed on the ground on an airfield. At least the aircraft returned without wrinkles or holes.

On May 4th there was time for only one last operational flight [in 'YQ-R', lasting 20 minutes] before the message was received to cease all operations. Later that day we learned that there would be no more operational flying and it was obvious that the war in Europe would soon be over. I well remember walking out onto the airfield which was so quiet, no aeroplane noises, a beautiful sunny day, thinking to myself, 'I've made it, I'm alive'! The next thought that occurred was what was I going

Gloster Meteor Mk I, EE227 of 616 Squadron about November 1944, one of the 16 Mk Is that served with the RAF. When elements of 616 Squadron moved to Continental Europe it was with the generally similar Mk III. (IWM)



to do with the rest of my life? If I live for my quota of three score and ten I've still got 46 years to fill in with some job or other."

FLYING AN ME 262

"However, this was not to be the end of the excitement, as we heard that two Me 262 pilots (anxious not to meet the Russians) had landed at Fassberg. Deciding that it would be nice to have a couple of 262's; myself and a second pilot went to look them over. They appeared to be in mint condition so it was decided to fly them back to Lubeck. The problem was that they came without any operating instructions. On being told that there was a Prisoner of War (P.O.W.) camp nearby we borrowed a jeep, in the rather forlorn hope that the army had netted somebody familiar with our new toys. The newly established barbed-wire compound was commanded by a harassed British army Captain with only a small force to control several thousand P.O.W.'s. Despite this he was most cooperative and sent an interpreter to interview a group of Luftwaffe pilots. Quite soon we were talking to an Oberstleutnant who had commanded an Me 262 unit and spoke good English. He readily agreed to help us, as a break from camp routine and boredom. He proved to be a likeable fellow, 'I was just a fighter pilot, never a Nazi' of course – *who was*? The army Captain seemed pleased to be rid of one of his charges, and I'm sure, would have let us have more of them, had we wanted.

By the time we had received our impromptu ground conversion onto Me 262's it was too late to leave for Lübeck, so we adjourned to the mess to arrange a bed and buy our new friend a drink. The following day, 29 May 1945, an RAF Group Captain very kindly had his men remove a section of fence between Fassberg's runway and a large grass field adjoining. Our German expert said this *should* give us enough takeoff run. The recommended takeoff speed, in kilometres per hour sounded pretty horrific!

Seniority dictated that I had dubious honour of going first. With the tail against the down-wind fence it was takeoff power, brake release and away. By the end of the airfield the aircraft showed no sign of becoming unstuck and, with its high wing-loading, hauling it off was not a good idea. A ridge where the fence had been threw the 262 into the air and, after one bounce on the grass of our newly created airfield extension, the thing stayed airborne. With the nose prudently held down the aircraft picked up speed most impressively.

The other 262 also got airborne successfully, so we headed for Lübeck in loose formation with our cruising speed about 450kmh (280mph) at the recommended power settings. A look back from the cockpit showed two very large engines on two very small wings. This caused me to up the recommended approach speed by 20kph, 'For Mum and the Kids'. On arrival, my number two landed successfully, which was encouraging, so it seemed a good idea to entertain the troops with a beat-up or two.

Squadron Leader Cornelieus James 'Sandbags' Sheddan was promoted to command 486 Squadron with the departure of Warren Schrader for 616 Squadron. He commanded the Squadron from 2 May 1945 until it was disbanded on 12 October 1945, at the 83 Group Disbandment Centre, Dunsfold, Surrey, England[1]. (T Neilsen)

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[1] Sortehaug, 1998.

Flight Lieutenant Dennis Barry, commander of 'B' Flight, 616 Squadron, with a Gloster Meteor Mk III, early 1945. Note the small, restrained piece of nose art. (D Barry via T Neilsen)

The Luftwaffe peacetime brick construction Officer's Mess was back from the airfield on a slight rise, so it was possible to fly past level with the first floor windows. After a few enjoyable minutes of low flying and high speed passes it was time to land. This was where things started to go awry. Landing gear selected down, only two green lights – no nose-wheel indication. Recycle landing gear, still only two green lights. A couple of sharp pull-ups made no difference. Having no radio communication prevented me asking the tower for an undercarriage check, so there was no option but to land and hope. It was possible to hold the nose up till about 120kph after touchdown, then it sank until those two underslung engines made contact with the concrete runway. In spite of the throttles and fuel control levers being closed, as the nacelles wore through, both engines started to burn.

After stopping I dashed clear then paused to watch the arrival of the fire truck, closely followed by Group Captain Johnnie Johnson in his magnificent Mercedes-Benz tourer. It was obvious from the big grin on his face that he enjoyed my discomfort, 'Bloody marvellous' he said, 'You beat the place up, get us all out to watch, then start a lovely fire. Bloody marvellous'. This was not exactly what I wanted to hear. It transpired that the nose-wheel jack had been damaged in the short landing and heavy braking at Fassberg, and once up it was never going to come down. Although the fire was put out quickly, repairing the aircraft was beyond our capabilities and it can be regarded as destroyed.

So, 616 Squadron did destroy an Me 262, but unfortunately after the 'final whistle'. In the wake of several fatal accidents an order was soon promulgated forbidding 'joy riding' in such dangerous ex-enemy aircraft. Our remaining Me 262 was subsequently flown to England for expert evaluation."

Me 262 versus Meteor

"The Messerschmitt Me 262 was an infinitely superior aircraft to the Gloster Meteor: 50 - 60 miles per hour faster, a swept wing and purpose designed for jet flight; whereas the Meteor was really an orthodox design which just happened to have jet engines. For me, at that time, the disconcerting thing about the 262 was its very short swept wing which was well behind the pilot – this gave the impression of flying along with very little support.

After VE day there was little for us to do and so the pilots took the opportunity to fly various other German aircraft. Aircraft we acquired included a Junkers Ju 34, which was a single engine transport and a predecessor to the three engine Ju 52. It was a simple machine with very low stalling speed, and low cruising speed for that matter. Also a Siebel 204 which was a quite fast twin engine communications plane. We used this for trips to Copenhagen and other places of interest. The

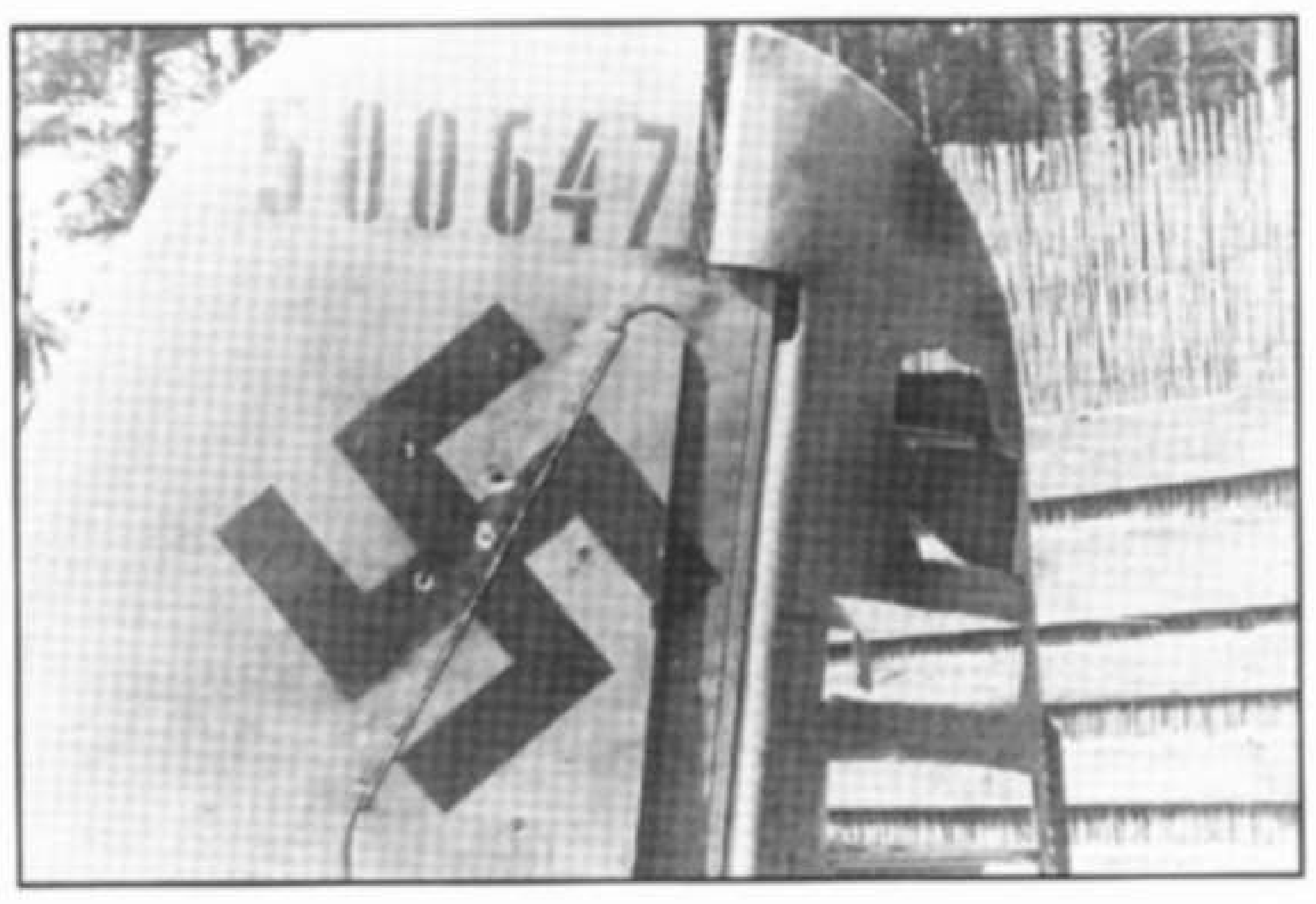
Siebel was more sophisticated and pleasant to fly, although its glass nose meant that when you looked at your feet on the rudder pedals you could see the ground. Rather disconcerting for someone who had spent most of his time flying fighters with a huge engine in front.

From our base at Lübeck we filled in time with various kinds of practice flying. We had to pay careful attention in Lübeck's landing circuit because we were only a mile or so from the Russian sector of Germany, and they developed a nasty habit of shooting at anything that strayed into their airspace. So even though the Germans had stopped shooting, the dangers had not completely gone.

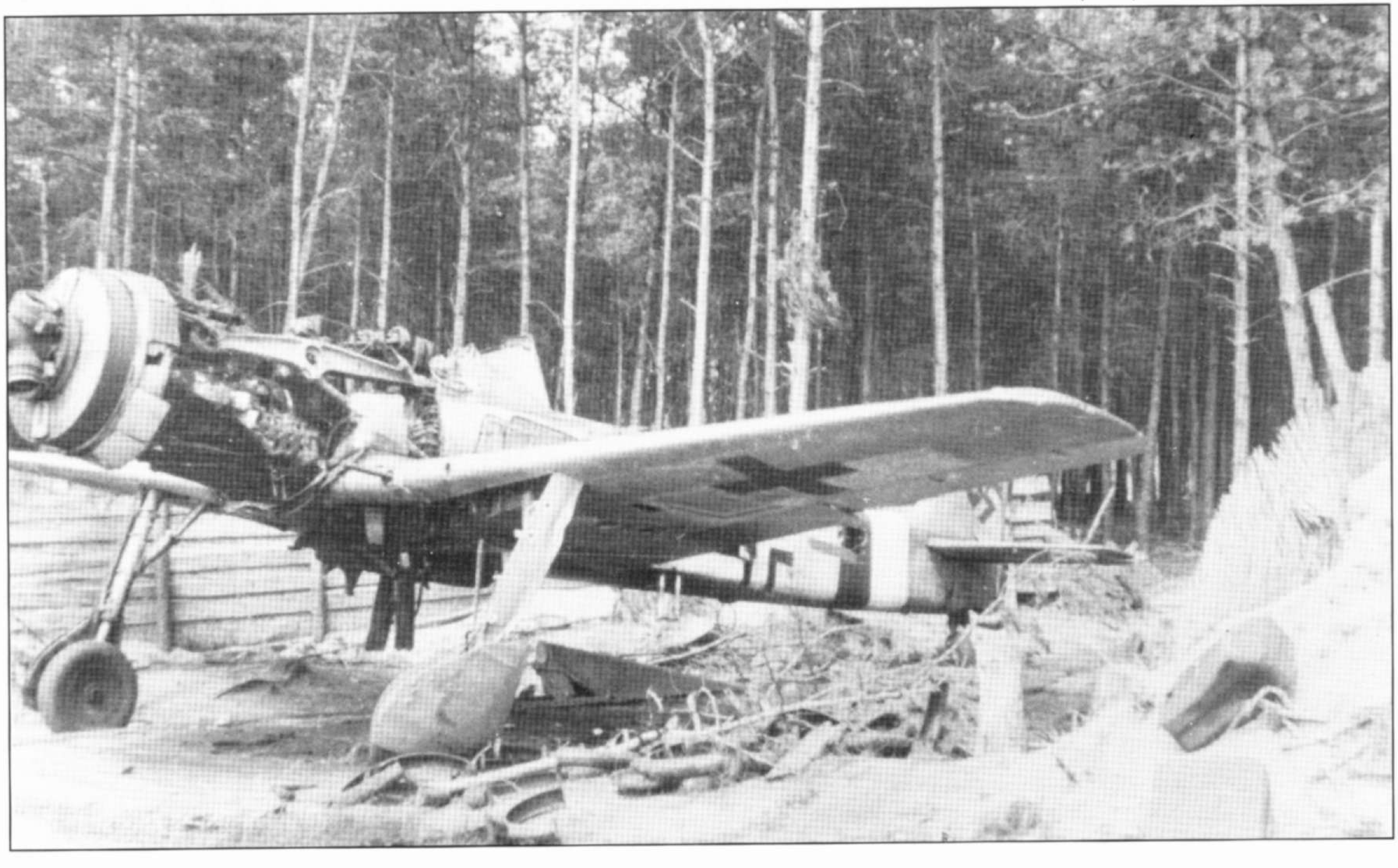
After leaving 616 Squadron (now renumbered 263), at the end of 1945 I attended the Empire Central Flying School at Hullavington in Wiltshire; during which we flew every aircraft in service with the RAF, including all the bombers and the Sunderland flying boat. We studied meteorology, the theory of flight, administration and all the other things that had been neglected during the War.

In July 1946 I left the RAF and returned to New Zealand, rejoining my prewar company, Philips Electrical Industries. I didn't find this occupation very interesting, but I did meet my future wife there. Quite by accident I heard that New Zealand's NAC (National Airways Corporation) was recruiting pilots but didn't think that they would want ex-fighter pilots. However the Company's Chief Pilot, Johnny Walker, asked if he could meet me to have a chat in his car outside the Wellington Head Office of Philips. So I met him for about 15 minutes and he told me that as I'd done quite well in the Air Force there was no reason why I should not do well with NAC – when could I join? That was my job interview."

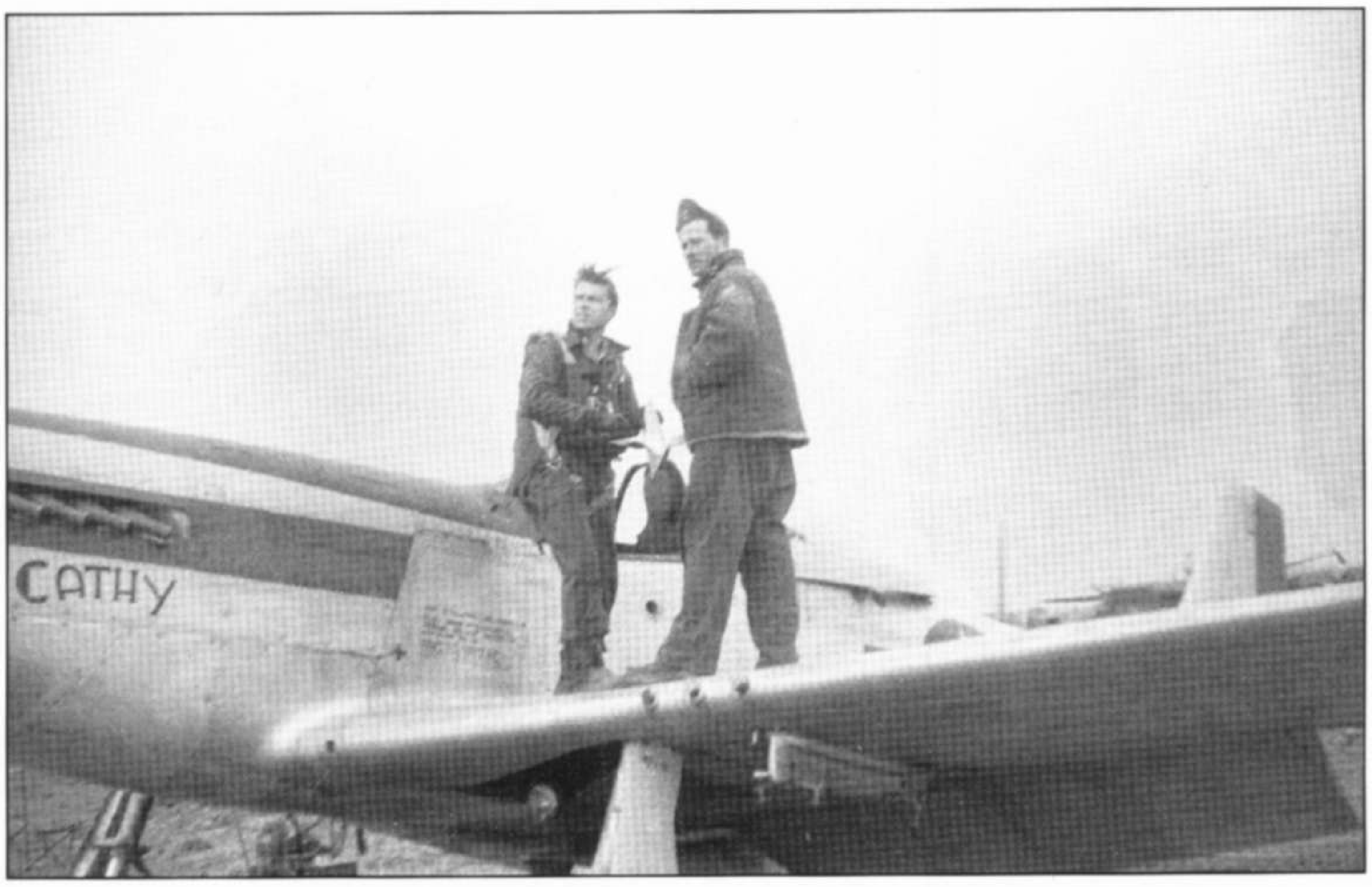
Warren Schrader eventually became NAC's Chief Pilot himself and finished active flying in 1976. He retired from the company in 1983 as Manager Safety Audit and lives 30 km north of Auckland, New Zealand, with his wife Valerie. They have two sons, Neil and Gordon.



One of the many wrecked aircraft abandoned by the retreating Luftwaffe. These two photos of 'Brown 4' were taken by a Canadian soldier and given to Warrant Officer Warren Blain of No. 2 Squadron RAF. They are of a rare Fw 190D-9, Werk Nr. 500647, with a Ta 152 style tail at Hustedt airfield near the town of Celle, Germany, in mid April 1945. Note the hand painted '4' on the undercarriage door. (W Blain via M Hampton)



RECONNAISSANCE FIGHTERS



An unknown pilot and Crew Chief with a P-51D named 'Cathy' . This aircraft was operated as an escort fighter by the 7th PG. (P Ludwig)

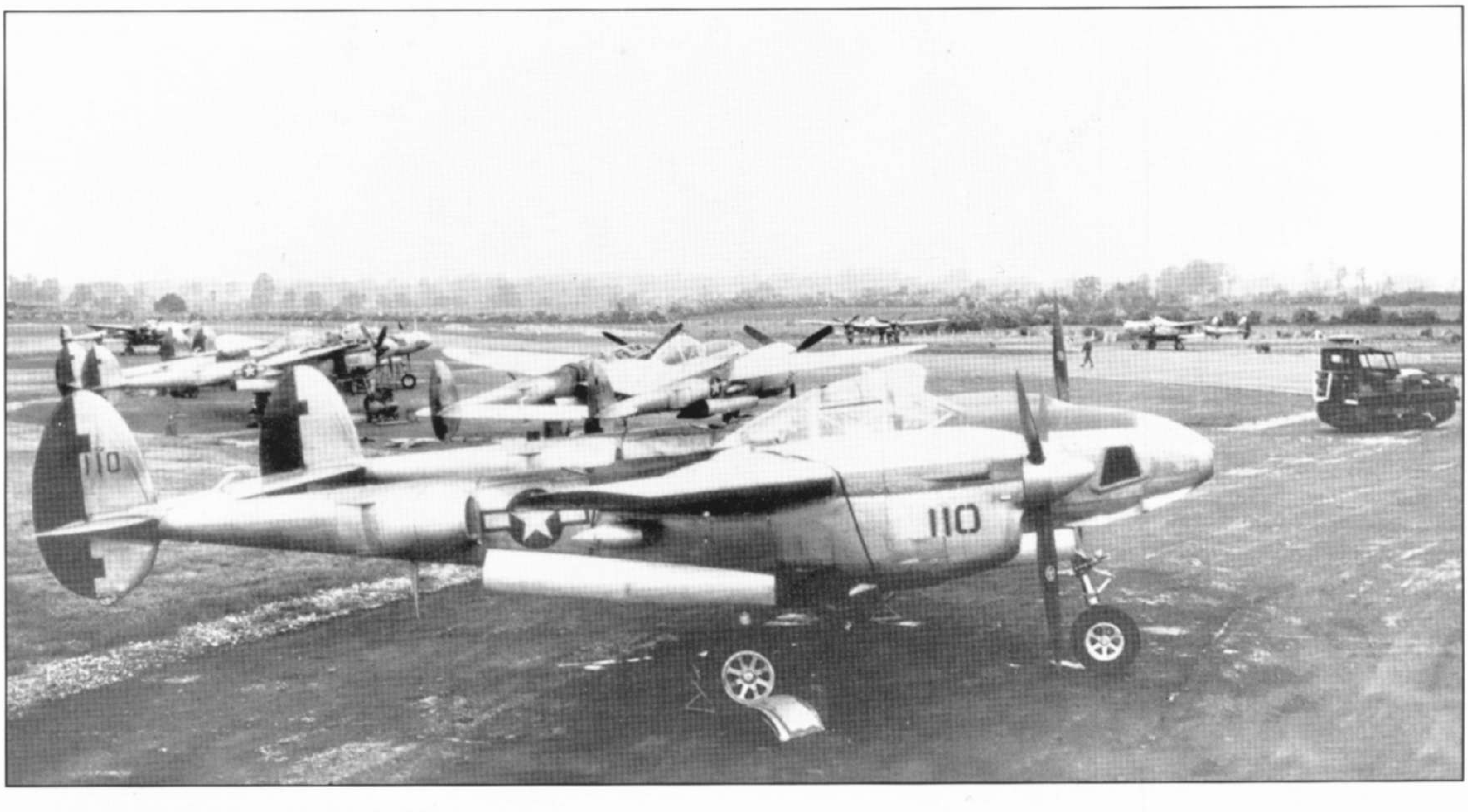
Allied plans to bomb Berlin and liberate Western Europe in 1944 caused an immense expansion in their requirement for Photographic Reconnaissance (PR) information from late 1943. After D-Day, long range, unarmed, high altitude, strategic reconnaissance was still required to support the Eighth Air Force and RAF Bomber Command strategic bombing campaigns. With the capture of airfields in France; the low-level, armed, Tactical Reconnaissance fighters now often accompanied the Allied Armies as they advanced accross Europe. This chapter provides a glimpse of the *fighter* aircraft involved in these tasks. High altitude Reconnaissance Spitfires are covered in other Ventura books[1].

ESCORT FIGHTERS FOR THE 7TH PHOTO GROUP

Luftwaffe attacks on the RAF and USAAF high flying PR aircraft had rarely been successful prior to D-Day. However the assignment of a special Luftwaffe high altitude Interceptor Unit flying Bf 109s and the advent of the new rocket powered Me 163 and Me 262 jet fighters; changed the balance of power away from the PR XI Spitfires and F-5 Lightnings flown by RAF PR Units and the 9th AF's 7th PG.

Lieutenant Gerald Adams, flying an F-5 in early August 1944 became the first pilot in the Group to be intercepted by one of the Luftwaffe's new 'wonder weapons', the Messerschmitt Me 163 Komet rocket-powered, tailless fighter. Adams evaded being shot down by the

This is a fine study of an F-5B at the Lightning ramp area at Mount Farm, Oxfordshire, late in the war. Camouflage paint has been removed from all these F-5s, which are bare-metal and polished for speed. Remaining are the 7th PG's red cowling strip Group marking and the rudders in squadron colours. (G Glaza)



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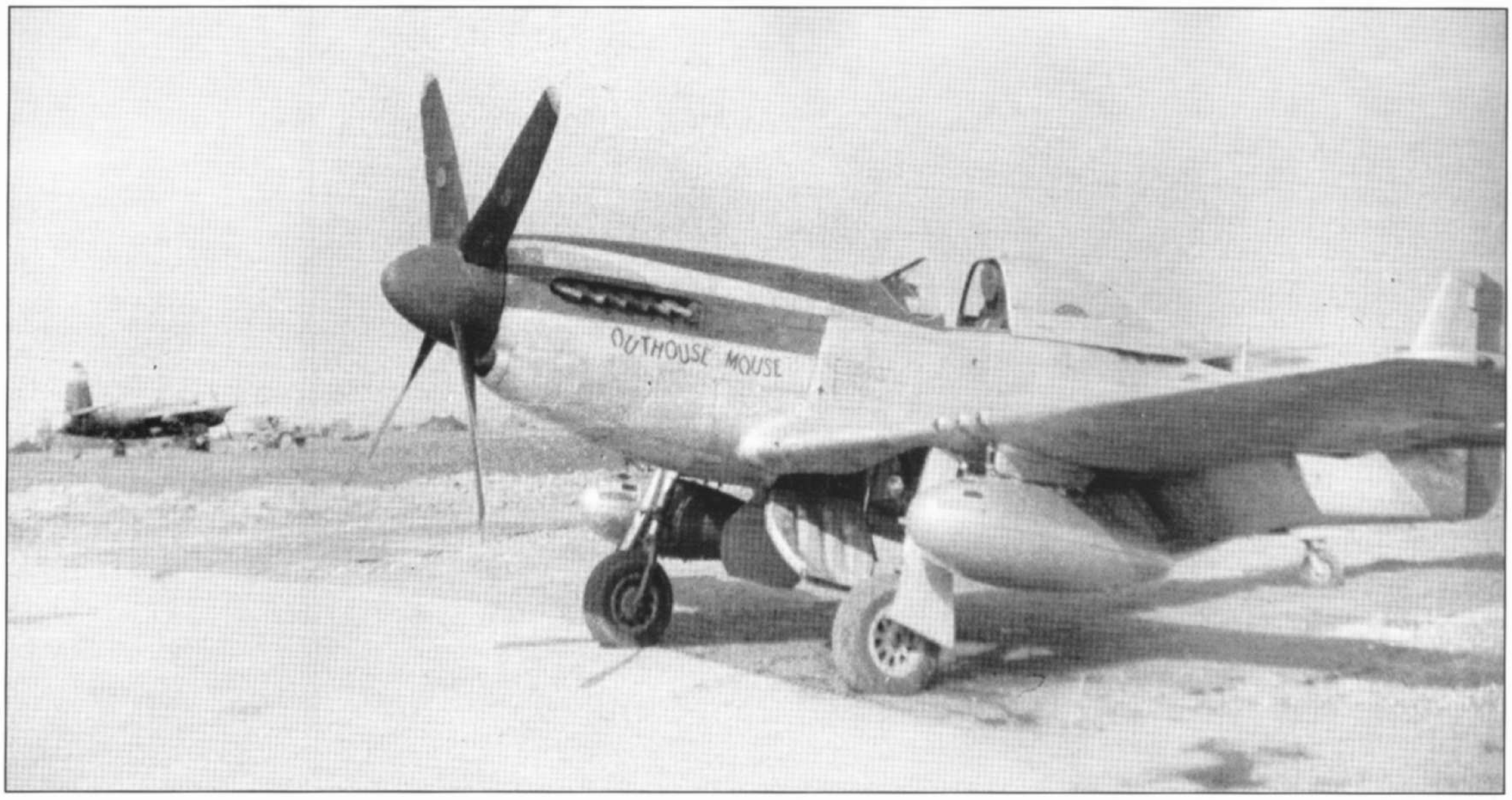
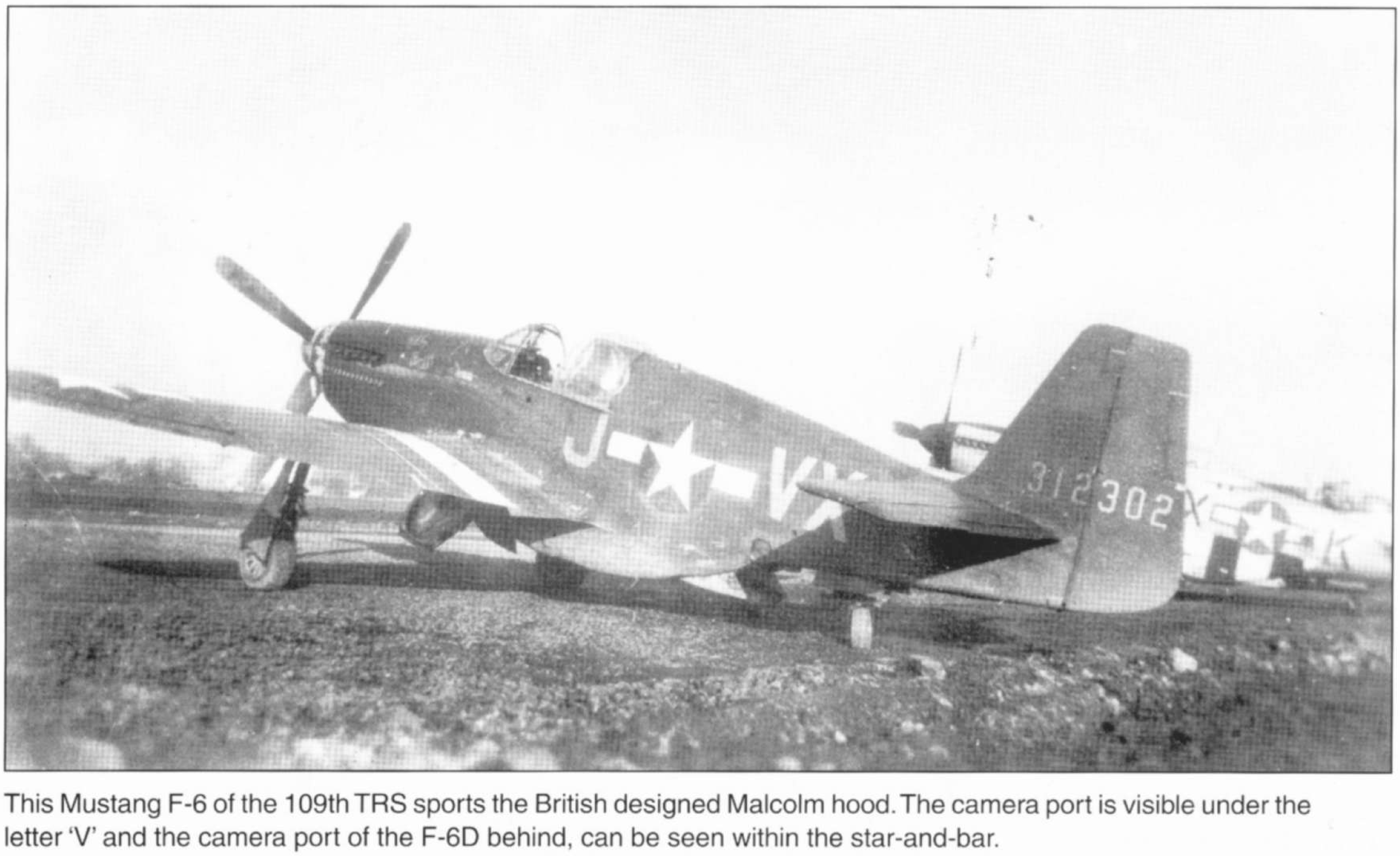
[1] Ludwig and Laird, 2000.



500 mph Messerschmitt, but it was only a matter of time before the Germans would achieve success against the high flying reconnaissance aircraft.

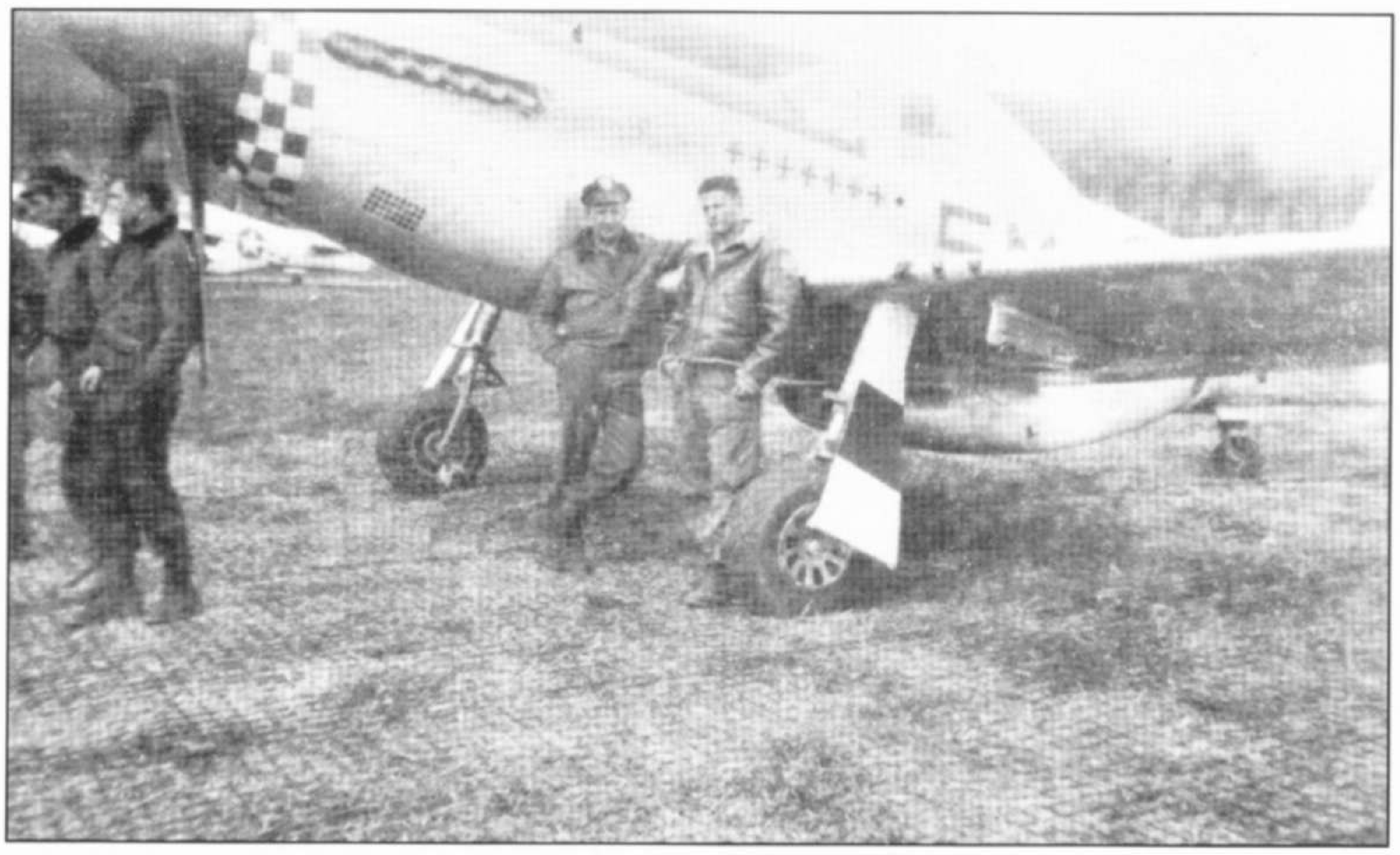
By now some of the Allied strategic reconnaissance squadrons were based in France and it was to be Lieutenant Ira Purdy who was the first 7th PG pilot caught by an Me 262. He was flying an F-5 from Denain/Prouvy to photograph Nurnburg, on 24 December 1944, when an Me 262 damaged one of his engines. However he managed to fly all the way back to his French base and crash-land. Although Purdy escaped

P-51D 'Outhouse Mouse' belonged to the 7th PG for fighter escort purposes. The red panel on the cowl and a coloured spinner and rudder followed 7th PG regulations. In the background is a Martin B-26 Marauder medium bomber. (R C Niehus)



This Mustang F-6 of the 109th TRS sports the British designed Malcolm hood. The camera port is visible under the letter 'V' and the camera port of the F-6D behind, can be seen within the star-and-bar.

The 109th TRS (then denoted as an Observation Squadron) arriving at Membury, Devon, England, September 1942. It served with the 67th RG and flew missions from England before moving to France in July, 1944. (Du Fosse)



Captain Clyde East, the USAAF's top-scoring Tac-R pilot was a late arrival to the 15th TRS. He joined the RCAF in June 1941 and was transferred to the USAAF in January 1944.

East scored his first victory on D-Day and flew with the 15th TRS until the end of the war in Europe. He is credited with 13 aerial victories. The photograph was taken in March, 1945 at Trier, Germany and shows East (wearing a hat) standing beside to his Crew Chief, Sergeant Ward.

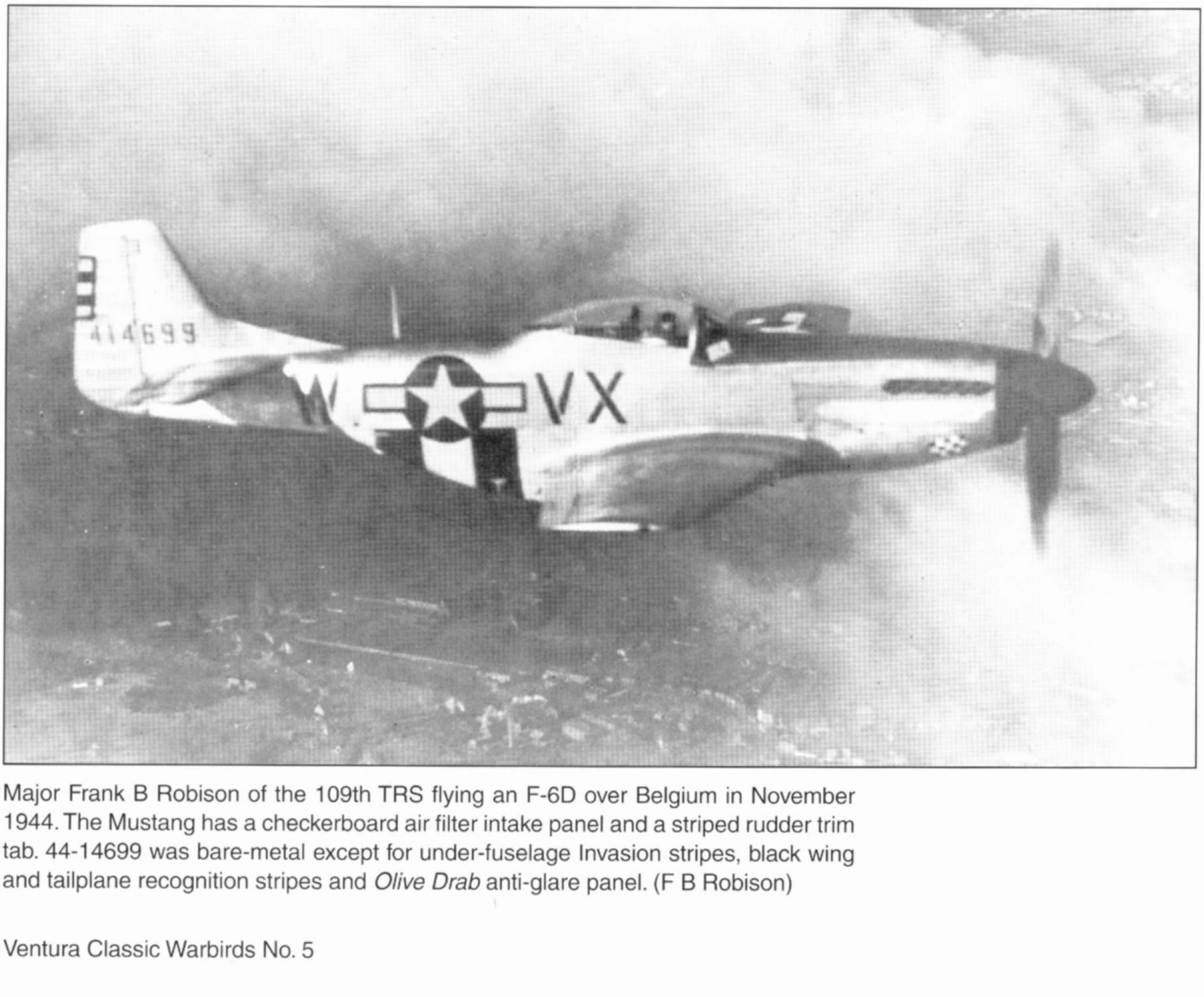
The F-6D Mustang, coded '5M-K', serial 44-14306 is named 'Li'l Margaret' and displays seven of Captain East's eventual thirteen victories. After being taken over by the 9th AF's IX Fighter Command, the 15th TRS was given '5M' as its Squadron code letters.

A restored Mustang flown at U.S. airshows in the late 1990s, was painted in Captain East's colours. (C East)

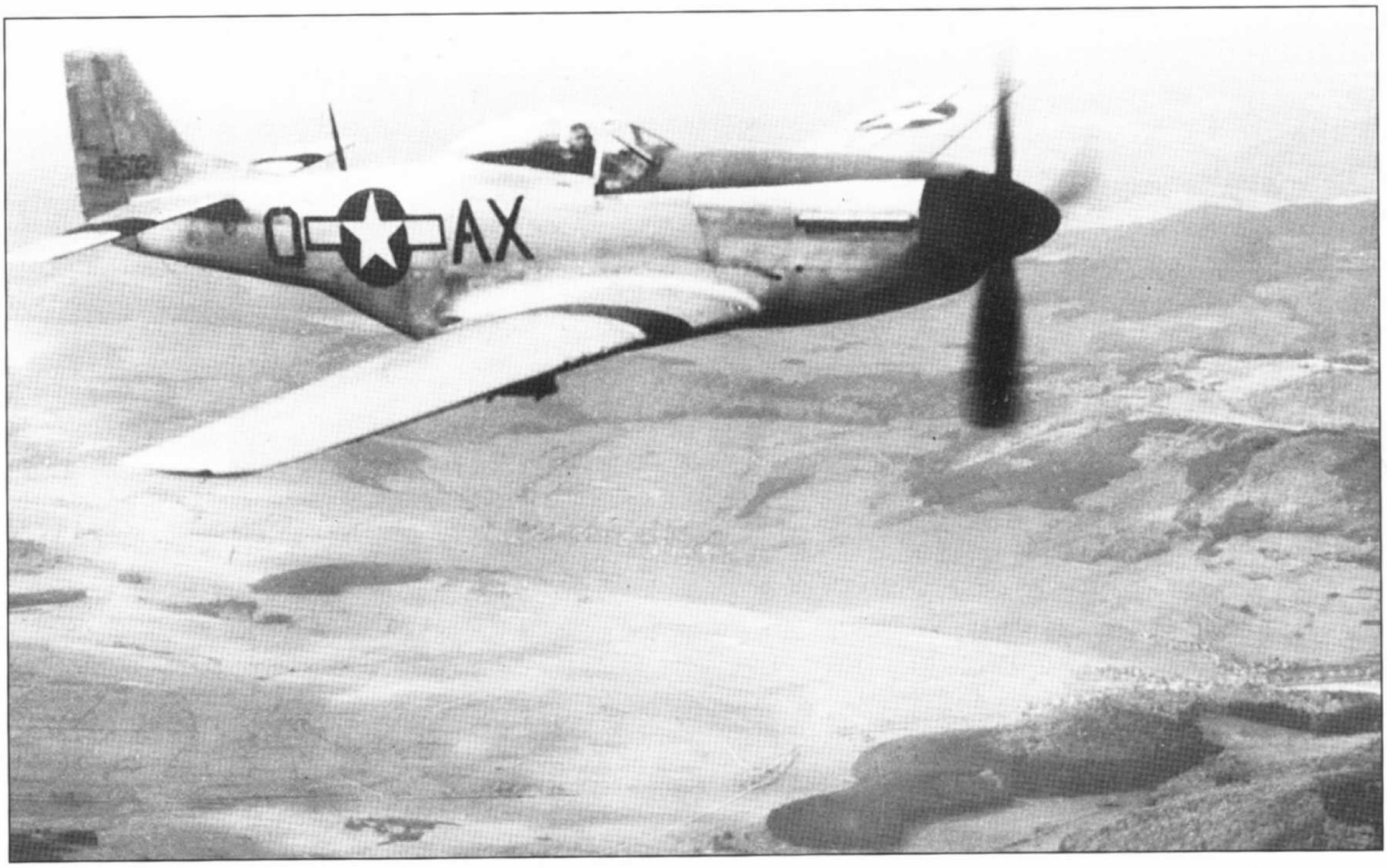
harm, his F-5 was burnt out and written off. The 9th AF had no choice but to provide escort fighters for its PR aircraft. By 4 January 1945, fourteen P-51Ds had been assigned to the 7th PG and the Groups Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Humbrecht, flew the first PR mission escorted by his own Mustangs, on 13 January 1945.

TAC/R MUSTANGS

Another USAAF Reconnaissance unit was the 67th Reconnaissance Group (RG). They had flown Spitfire Mk Vs before four of its Squadrons; the 12th, 15th, 107th and 109th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons (TRS), were re-equipped with North American F-6 Mustangs



Major Frank B Robison of the 109th TRS flying an F-6D over Belgium in November 1944. The Mustang has a checkerboard air filter intake panel and a striped rudder trim tab. 44-14699 was bare-metal except for under-fuselage Invasion stripes, black wing and tailplane recognition stripes and *Olive Drab* anti-glare panel. (F B Robison)



Photographed from another reconnaissance aircraft, this 107th TRS F-6D, serial number 44-72532, displays a bare-metal exterior.

The 107th TRS formed part of the 67th RG from when it arrived at Membury, England, in September, 1942. It moved to a France on 28 June, 1944, just three weeks after D-Day. (Selfridge Military Air Museum)

as their primary type for the Tac/R role prior to D-Day. They were tasked with making low-level photo runs along the coast from Cherbourg, France, north to Holland to provide information for the landings in Normandy. In July 1944 the Group moved to France following the Allied armies and became the 'eyes' of the American First Army during the summer and autumn of 1944.

Tac-R pilots often flew at treetop level to get their photographs and engaged enemy fighters or strafed ground targets on the way home. Once the Mustang became standard for Tac-R squadrons, pilots of the Group engaged the Luftwaffe far more frequently and several Aces were members of Tac-R squadrons.

Of the 67th R G's four main Squadrons, the 12th TRS achieved 22 aerial victories; 15th TRS pilots are credited with 65, including 13 to Captain Clyde East, 8.5 to Captain John Hoefker and 6.5 to 2nd Lt. Leland Larson. Four aerial victories are credited to the 107th and 11 to the 109th, include two to Captain Frank B. Robison.

TAC/R SPITFIRE

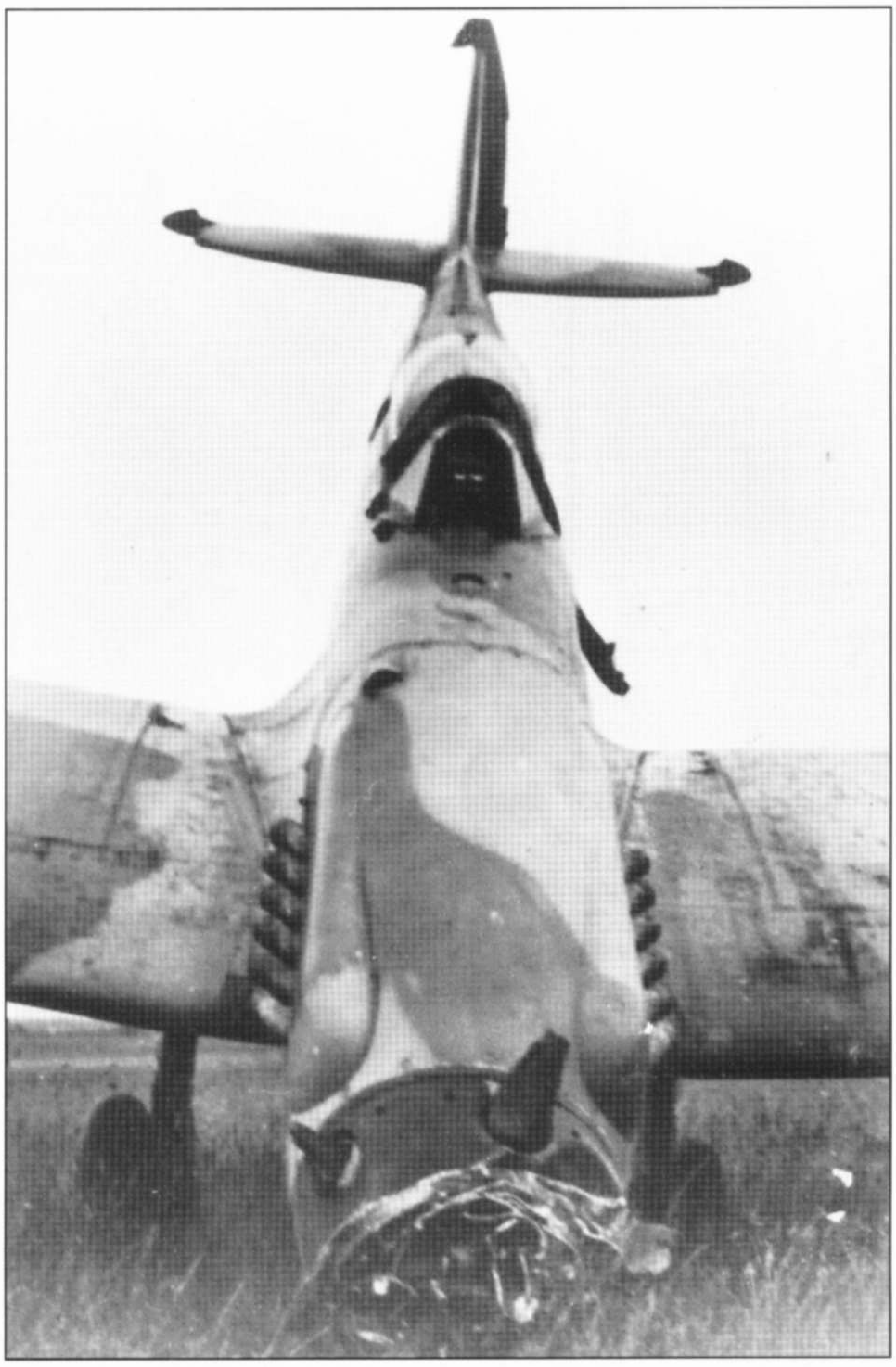
No. 2 Squadron RAF spent a brief spell in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force in 1939 flying Westland Lysanders. It was not until July 1944 that they were able to return, this time with the immensely more powerful Spitfire FR Mk XIV.

Following victory in Europe they moved on to Germany, where their Mk XIVs were supplemented with a number of PR Mk XI Spitfires which performed various aerial surveillance tasks, as part of the post war Allied Occupation Force.

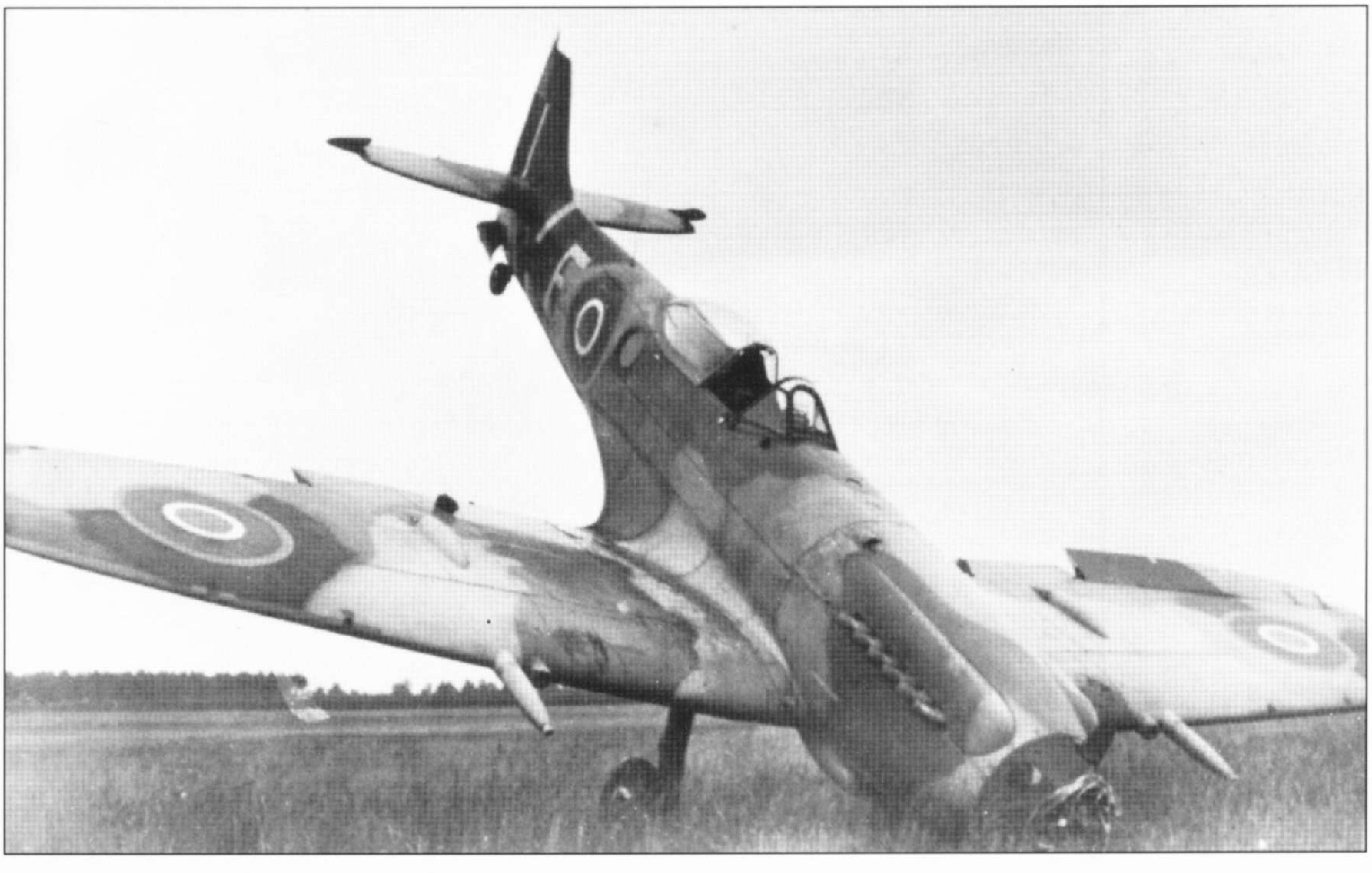
A No. 2 Squadron pilot was Warrant Officer Warren Blain (As a child Warren Blain had polio and suffered a mild disability. However the doctor who assessed him for flying training had also been a sufferer and assessed Blain as 'fit to fly single engine aircraft only').

On 22 June 1945, Warrant Officer Blain burst a tyre landing on the pierced steel planking runway at Wunstorf, Germany, causing his Spitfire FR Mk XIV to nose-over and shatter its propeller. However the war in Europe was now over, and such was the change in official attitude that this minor mishap saw his logbook endorsed for 'carelessness'. Three months earlier, with the war still in progress, the incident would not have rated a mention. The 22 June flight proved to be Warrant Officer Blain's last logged flight in a Spitfire, as although the machine had its propeller replaced and Blain test flew it, he did not enter the flight in his log book.

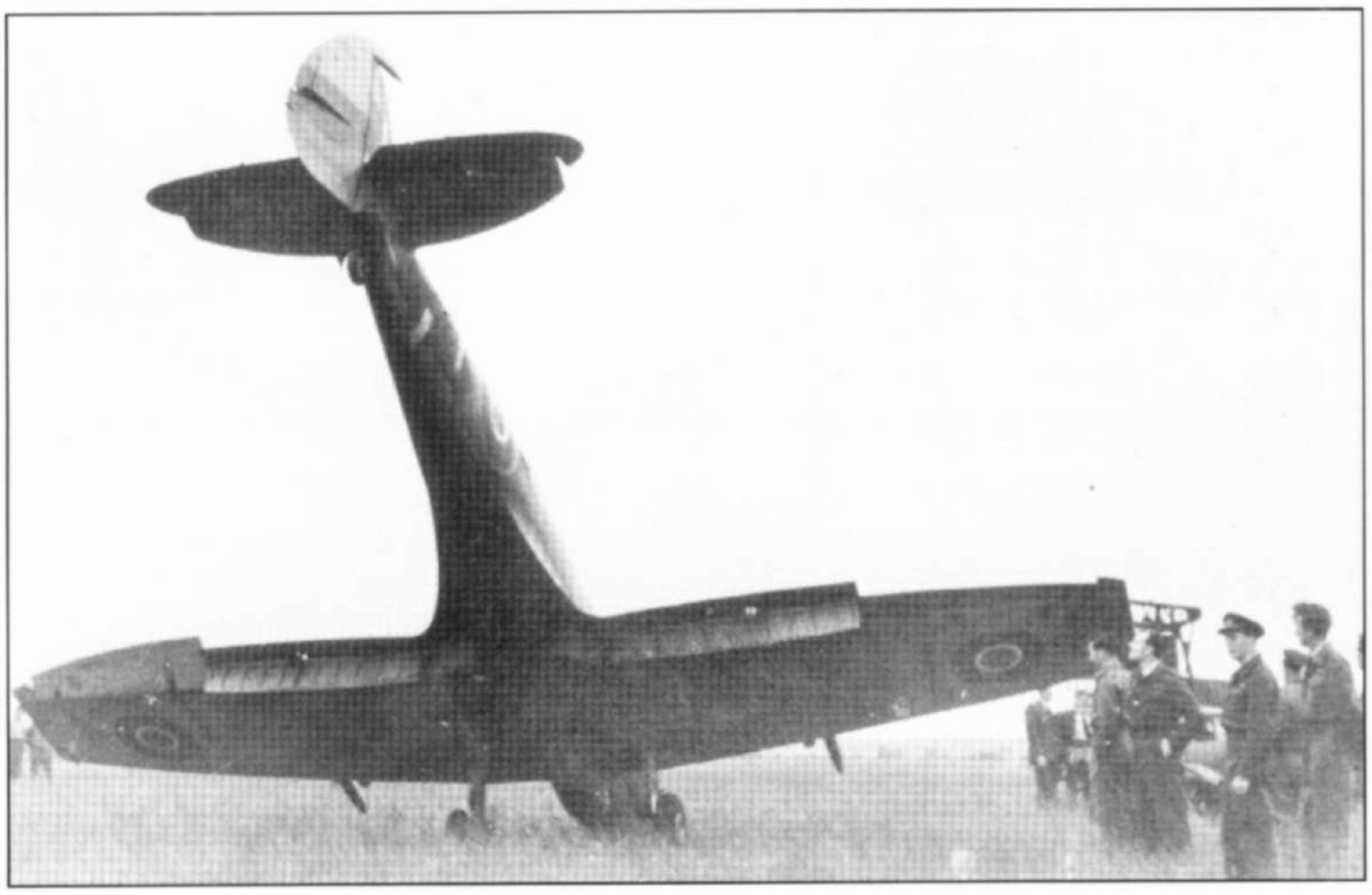
Blain's Spitfire's camouflage and markings has a number of interesting features. The rear fuselage band has been reduced to 6" in width and the spinner is painted a *Night* black to make the aircraft less visible on the ground. The 56" type 'B' upper wing roundels have been replaced with 36" type 'C1' roundels, rather than 56" versions. The rapid deterioration which has



Right and **below.** Spitfire FR Mk XIV, RN113 or NM818, coded 'F', nosed-over at Wunstorf, Germany, 22 June 1945. Note the small size of the upper wing roundels and partly painted out *Sky* rear fuselage band. (M Hampton)



occurred to its paint finish can be seen by comparing the fresh *Ocean Grey* applied to cover the larger 56" roundels and the faded *Ocean Grey* beside it. Some authors have reported that a lighter version of *Ocean Grey* was used later in the war, but that is not so. Simple fading was the reason, as seen here.



An under belly view of Spitfire Mk XIV RN113 or NM818, 22 June 1945. (M Hampton)

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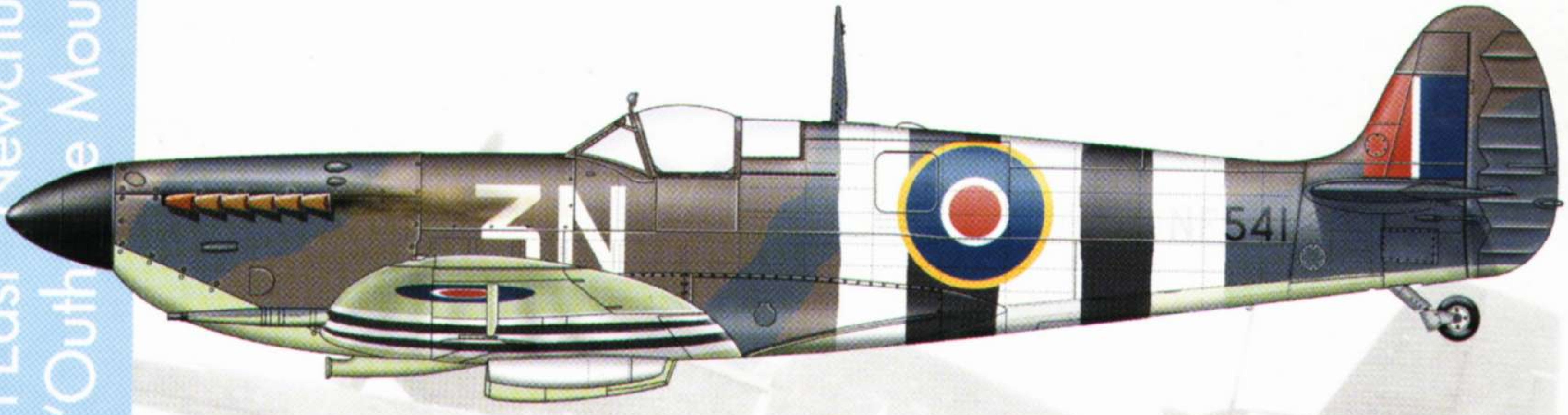
Title Page

One important role of RAF Coastal Command around D-Day, was to 'control' German shipping in the North Sea, the South Western approaches and the English Channel. This photograph was taken on 30 July 1944, on an anti-shipping strike by 15 torpedo armed 489 (NZ) Squadron Beaufighters from Dallachy, Norfolk; 12 anti-flak Beaufighters from 455 (RAAF) Squadron from Dallachy and North Coates, Lincolnshire; and 12 anti-flak Beaufighters of 143 Squadron from Manston, Kent.

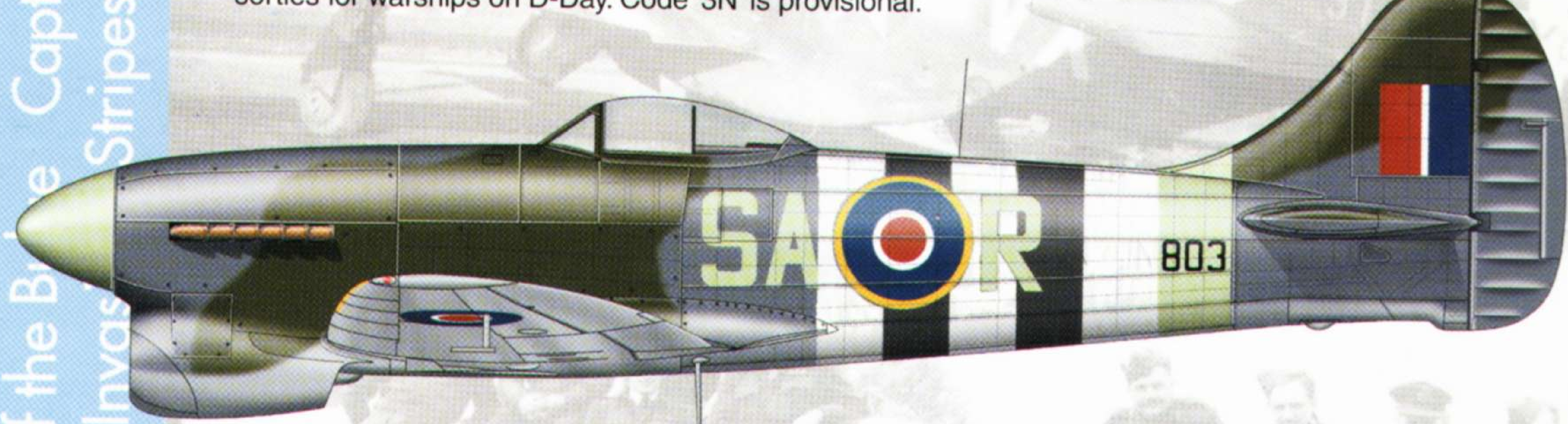
From the spring of 1944 onwards, a number of RAF Spitfire squadrons were re-equipped with the longer range P-51 Mustangs to improve their capability as bomber escorts. No. 315 (Polish) Squadron received its first Mustangs in March 1944 and here a Mustang Mk III, 'PK-W', FB123, flown by Warrant Officer Ryszard Idrian is providing close escort to a 489 Squadron Beaufighter. The Poles claimed two Me 109s, one Fw 190, one Ju 88 and three unidentified enemy aircraft destroyed on the 30 July 1944 operation.

Beaufighter TFX, NE429, 'P6-S', was piloted by Pilot Officer E.F.C. Burrows, with Navigator Flight Sergeant D.A. Young. The code 'P6-S' has recently been applied over the code '1-S'. Note the bomb racks, nose 'yagi' antenna and that the wing mounted 0·303 machine guns have been removed and their ports covered over.

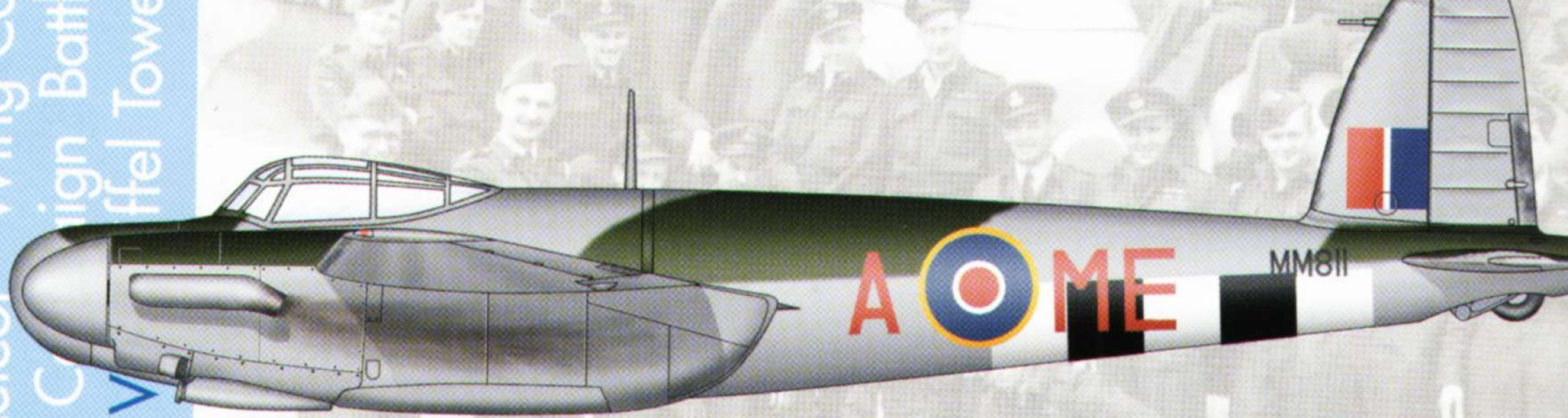
Lieutenant Lang Normandy 451 Squadron Anti V1 Campaign Tac/R Mustang Volkel
109th TRS Seafire F.III Me 262 Meteor Wing Commander Schrader "Q" Site
488 Squadron Hawker Tempest V2 Campaign Battle of the Bulge Captain East Newchurch GC 2/7
357th Spitfire "Frantic V Eiffel Tower Invasion Stripes 'Outhouse Mouse'



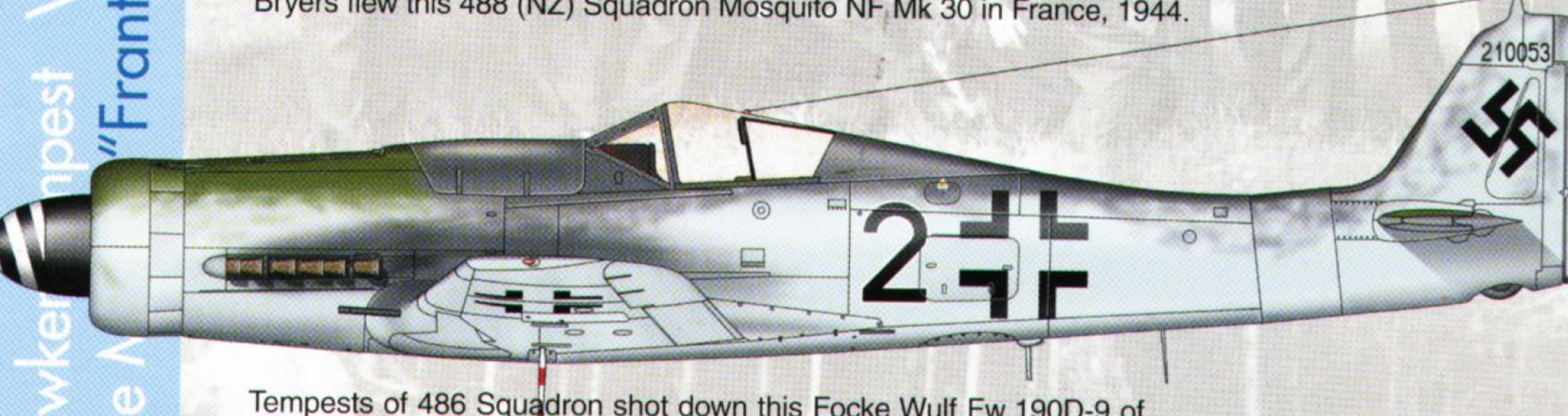
Lieutenant Hugh Lang flew Seafire L.III, NF541 on gun-spotting sorties for warships on D-Day. Code '3N' is provisional.



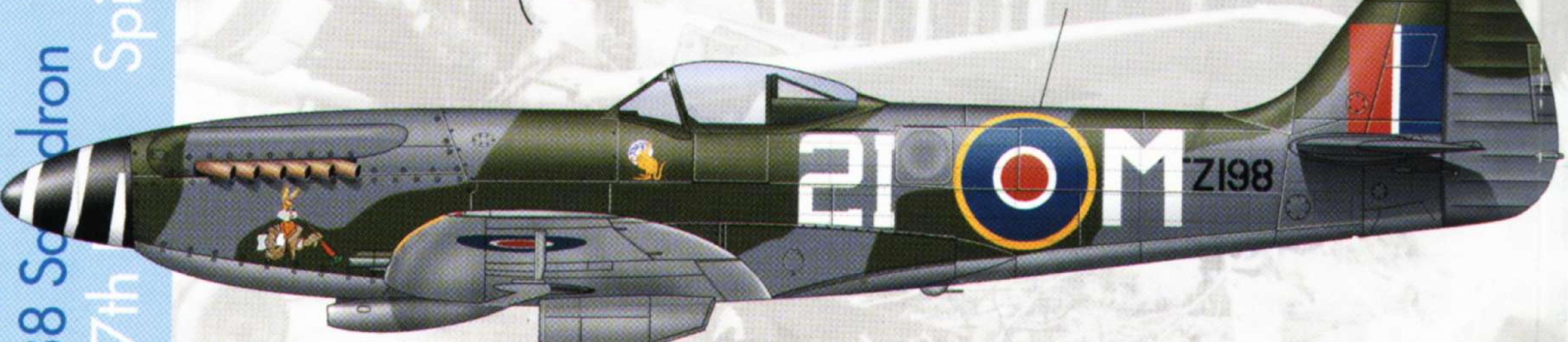
Flight Lieutenant Jack Stafford flew 486 (NZ) Squadron Tempest 'SA-R' on a Normandy beachhead patrol, 10 June 1944.



Flying Officer Allott Gabites and Navigator/Radar Operator Flying Officer Phillip Bryers flew this 488 (NZ) Squadron Mosquito NF Mk 30 in France, 1944.



Tempests of 486 Squadron shot down this Focke Wulf Fw 190D-9 of 10 Staffel JG54, flown by Oberleutnant Berger, 27 December, 1945.



Spitfire FR Mk XIV TZ198 of 443 (RCAF) Squadron, Germany, January 1946.